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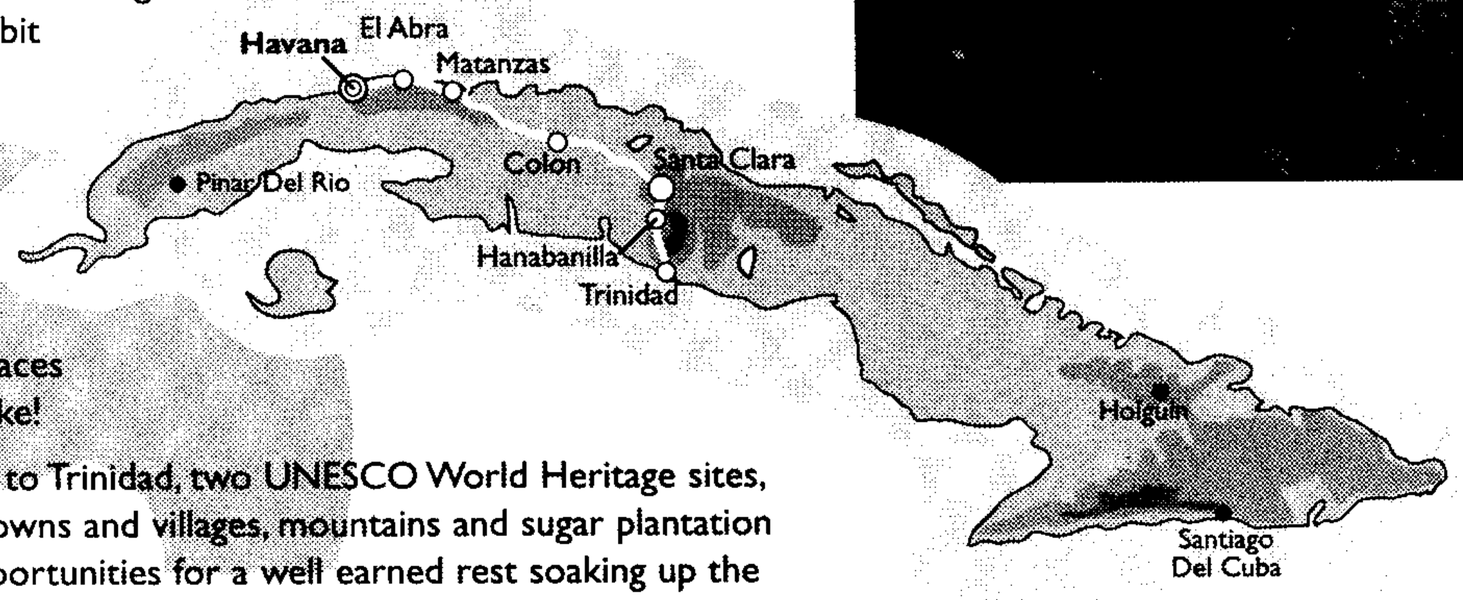

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Gnome

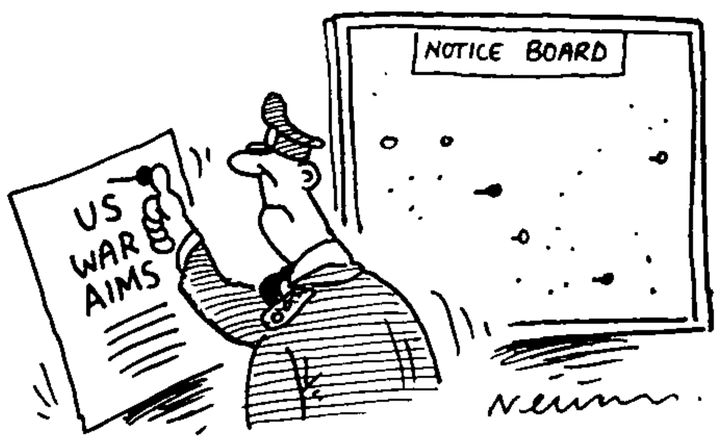
Apology: Mr James Hewitt

OVER the past ten years, the Gnome on Sunday may have inadvertently given the impression that Mr James Hewitt, the one-time companion of the late Princess of Wales, was in some way "a filthy, lying, greedy, love rat".

Headlines such as "Hewitt Shames Nation In Di Letters Outrage", "Time To String Up This Treacherous Sex Fiend" and "Gazza Back On Booze" *(Shome mishtake surely?)* may have led readers to believe that the Gnome on Sunday disapproved of Major Hewitt and his intimate friendship with Princess Diana.

We now realise, having spent £5 million on the serialisation rights of his autobiography — *James Hewitt: My Own Story* — that Major Hewitt is, in fact, an outstanding war hero, a sensitive and decent human being, a victim of the media in his own right, a poet, writer and statesman... a man whose heart was cruelly broken... steamy love romps... seven times a night... read all about it... Yes, it's all in tomorrow's Gnome on Sunday.

We apologise to our readers for any distress caused to them by this breathtaking hypocrisy *(Surely "heartwarming story that will take your breath away"? Ed.)*



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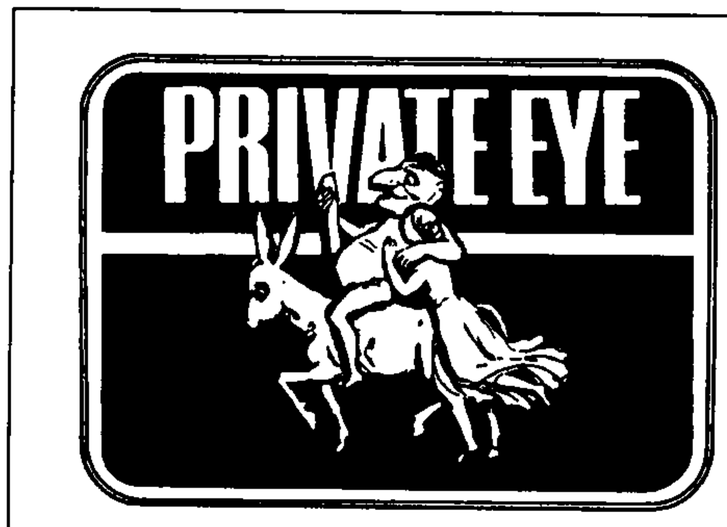

COLOUR SECTION

WHAT a happy coincidence that Nato's 50th birthday party should come in the middle of the Kosovo conflict. How better to show the alliance's high moral purpose than by focusing on its new humanitarian mission?

Well, it would be a happy coincidence but for the fact that the Washington jamboree had been planned all along as an orgy of triumphalism and commercial palm-greasing, and even the desperate last-minute attempts to turn it into a period of "sombre reflection" failed to hide some of the excesses.

All homeless people were ordered to leave the Federal Triangle area of Washington by last Friday morning; the stragglers were removed by force, presumably because Nato delegates worrying about the dispossessed masses of Kosovo wouldn't wish to be distracted by the sight of people living on the streets of DC.

A planned military parade was cancelled and replaced by a three-hour session on Kosovo. It's a measure of how badly Nato misjudged the length of the war that reviewing stands were actually erected along the Mall in Washington for the procession: state workers who had put up the podia only began dismantling them on the Monday before the summit.

But no amount of hasty rejigging could conceal the traces of corporate influence-peddling. Staging the summit cost $25m, of which $8m was raised from big business, mostly via the "Nato Summit Host Committee". Firms had to pay a quarter of a million dollars each to have an executive on the committee, and all the usual suspects — Boeing, United Technologies, etc — were happy to oblige. War may be hell, but it's a great advertising opportunity for the defence industry.

Even some non-military companies joined in. George Peapples of General Motors, Jacques Nasser of Ford and Robert Libatore of DaimlerChrysler gave $750,000 between them for the chance to welcome Nato heads of government. GM in particular is interested in selling its Opel Astra (manufactured in Hungary) in the former Yugoslavia. By another happy coincidence, Nato bombs destroyed Serbia's Yugo car factory shortly before the summit. This is certainly one way to break into the East European car market.

BEFORE a single bomb was dropped on Slobodan Milosevic, Tony Blair and Co had proved extremely sensitive to the sensibilities of Bill Clinton, the world's most famous draft dodger.

Even though it was clear to most of the experts in the Pentagon — that ground forces would be needed to stop the Serbs devastating Kosovo, everyone agreed that it should not really be mentioned. The heights of sensitivity were shown with the accidental bombing of the Kosovar refugee column. High level sources in the United States are claiming that even though RAF harriers had already seen the convoy, identified it as civilian and peeled away, the USAF went ahead and bombed. Although the tragedy was accidental, its cause wasn't. US planes fly too high for accurate target assessment precisely because of president Clinton's fear of US casualties.

Clinton has now realised that denying that there could ever be ground troops is actually prolonging the war. So he has prepared for a long campaign — to get congress to take the rap for it. A group of senators ranging from Republican war-horses to liberal Democrats are now calling for ground forces. Among them is Connecticut senator Chris Dodds, a renowned Clinton poodle who would not have the temerity to take such a step without his master's wink.

By the time the president has covered his rear, of course, there won't be any Kosovars left in their homeland. But that might make it easier to bomb without "collateral damage".

NUMBER 10's strategy for blocking "Red" Ken Livingstone from standing as Labour's candidate for mayor of London is in trouble... yet again.

It had let it be known that Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam would be Labour's ideal choice, and did so by getting ever-obliging *Spectator* hack Sion Simon to float the ludicrous nostrum in the magazine. But as with health secretary Frank Dobson, who had also been surprised to learn of his keenness for the job via tame newspaper hacks (and who subsequently pronounced them "liars"), the Blessed Mo was having none of it.

Last week she made a surprise appearance at the launch of John Carvel's new book *Turn Again Livingstone* in Piccadilly. There she delighted Leninspart by announcing to a questioner that "Ken is running for mayor, not me". So it's back to the drawing board...

ONE Nato member has already mobilised ground forces and sent them in. It is Turkey — which has despatched 5,000 troops to, er, Northern Iraq to hammer the Kurds. Turkish security forces have also arrested thousands rallying to support the legal Kurdish nationalist party, Hadep.

These antics will come as no surprise to the home office, whose current "country assessment" of Turkey, used when considering asylum appeals, notes the "systematic use of torture by security forces, deaths in police custody, disappearances and extrajudicial executions". Given this assessment, you might imagine that our own humanitarian government wouldn't want to snuggle up to the torturers and killers.

But while one bit of Whitehall frets about torture, another is more concerned with trade. So DTI minister Brian Wilson recently expressed his "delight" at the news that the British overseas trade board, chaired by the Duke of Kent, was designating Turkey a "campaign market", receiving special promotional efforts in the form of trade fairs, missions, seminars and diplomatic support.

Several members of the board are executives from companies which supply military hardware to the Turkish regime — including GKN, GEC and Rolls-Royce. But it would of course be absurd to suggest any connection between this and the board's apparent insouciance about Turkish atrocities.

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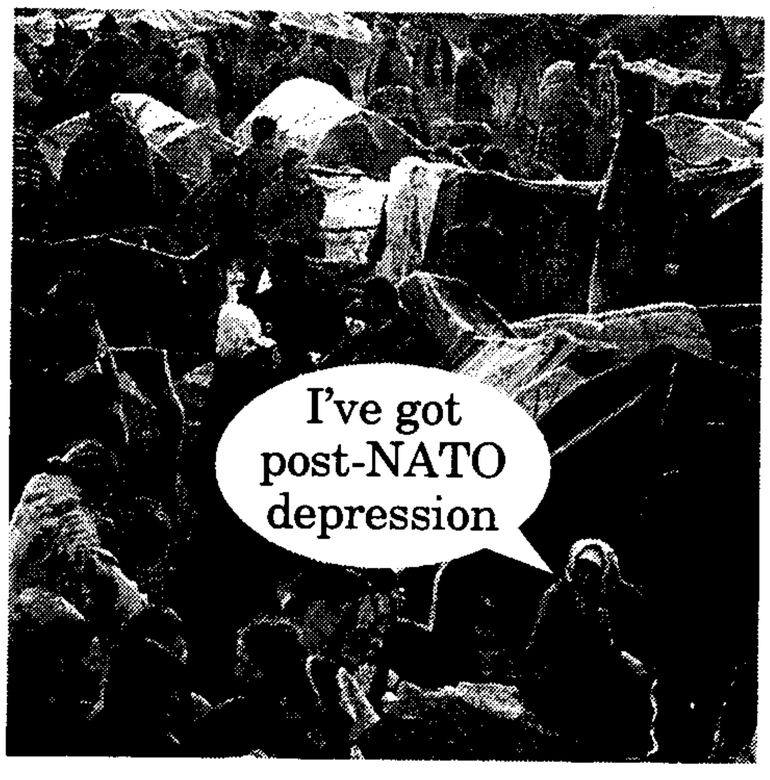


NEWS

IF ANY Kosovan refugees actually make it to Britain their wretched plight will be exacerbated by Whitehall's latest computer cock-up, the failure of Siemens's "Casework" system.

Casework was meant to be a model privatisation of the home office's immigration procedures, introducing private capital and computerisation under a private finance initiative. However, although Casework was supposed to come on-line as long ago as 1997, it still isn't working. Asylum seekers will thus be marooned in no man's land for months while their files gather mildew in a basement in Croydon.

Reporting of the national audit office's (NAO) investigation into the fiasco, published last month, has been strangely muted. This was accomplished by some simple media management. Immigration minister Mike O'Brien put out a press release the day *before* the report was released, "welcoming" its contents and promising to "implement an action plan to get back on track".

O'Brien forgot to add that it was he who acted as chief apologist for the computer company, and who then added to the chaos by authorising the "big bang" approach of moving offices at the same time as the failing computer system was introduced — in spite of warnings from staff that it would end in tears.

In his pre-emptive reaction last month, O'Brien claimed that Siemens Business Services won the contract "following an open competition". Anyone bothering to read the NAO's report will learn otherwise. The home office had originally invited three tenders — from EDS, Arthur Anderson and Siemens. EDS pulled out. Arthur Anderson then disqualified itself because its proposal was based on NIRS2, its disastrous computerisation of National Insurance (see *Eyes passim*). So, ironically, one Whitehall IT fiasco drove the government into the arms of another. Down to a single tender, the home office decided not to call in more suppliers because it hadn't enough staff to evaluate any other bids.

The final deal with Siemens includes what the NAO describes as "a novel payment mechanism". That is, even though Siemens is meant to carry all the financial risk, it has already received payments of around 30 percent of the £77m contract for achieving "new technology milestones" — though the system doesn't work.

Another "novel" element is that the privatisation was never priced against a simple public-sector alternative. Instead, Siemens will make a profit if it does better than a "baseline" figure dreamed up by the home office after the contract had been awarded — when Siemens was in an enormously strong bargaining position. As the NAO comments: "It is undesirable for contracts to leave the detailed mechanism for remunerating the supplier to be decided later."

A final unreported detail in the Casework catastrophe is that the home office paid £490,000 to external advisers to help with the tender, of which the lion's share went to Sema Group. But the ensuing *debacle* has not put ministers off the company. On 13 April they announced that Sema would lead "IT2000", a PFI scheme to computerise the whole of the home office, which is one of the largest-ever government computing contracts. Here we go again...

THE problem with Frankenstein food, according to the European commission, is that the scientists who produce it are misunderstood.

To remedy this the commission paid for scientists who are involved in developing genetically modified (GM) food to attend a conference in Cambridge on 22 April to learn how better to spin. Anti-GM foods groups were also invited — with a payment offered — to dine with the scientists, enabling them to practise their new presentational skills.

The service was offered by Goldwyn Associates Ltd, a production company that regularly makes documentaries for the BBC. Presumably when European commissioners hear the arguments of the newly articulate scientists, the EU's strict restrictions on the sale of GM products will be lifted.

MORE on Metropolitan police sergeant Gurpal Virdi, who complained when a racist stabbing he investigated was not registered as a racial incident.

Virdi had charges of alleged racist activity trumped up against *him* and was arrested a year ago and suspended pending disciplinary charges. In March he was told he would not face prosecution, but is still suspended from duty.

His case is being considered by the CIB, the Met department which investigates police corruption. Last week at a public meeting in Hounslow, Met commissioner Sir Paul Condon was handed a petition signed by 30 councillors and 700 locals, demanding Sgt Virdi's full reinstatement.

Meanwhile Tory MP Peter Bottomley continues to pursue his case in the Commons. On 31 March he tabled a written question to Kate Hoey, home office minister in charge of the Met, requesting information — in particular on the identities of police officers who searched Sgt Virdi's house, moved his belongings from his locker to a safe at another police station, and when "inappropriate material" was created on the police computer regarding Virdi's case.

On 20 April Hoey replied that as disciplinary proceedings were "still being considered", it would be "inappropriate for me to comment" on most of the points Bottomley raised. She did, however, give details of the search of his house by a POLSA team. "Polsa teams have a role in counter-terrorist searches and undertake evidence gathering in searches in support of major investigations."

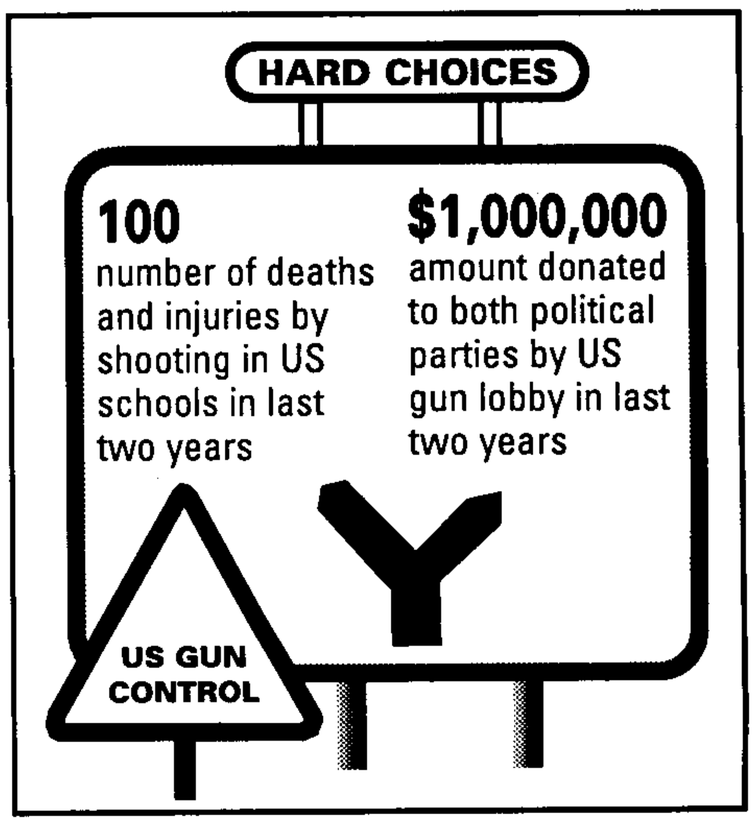
As for the removal of the sergeant's belongings from his locker *inside* Hanwell Road police station, "this has been reported as a theft... and is under investigation. As at 15 April" — a year to the day after Sergeant Virdi's initial arrest — "it has not been established who moved the property and when it was moved."

"Excuse me, sonny — is this your vehicle?"

INTERNATIONAL development select committee chairman Bowen Wells was incandescent after being told by Clare Short, the overseas development minister, that a planned trip by his committee to Macedonian refugee camps would "get in the way" of aid workers and that she intended to block it.

It is virtually unheard of for a minister to direct the plans of a select committee, particularly plans made some time in advance. And then there is the small matter of Short's own recent visit to Macedonia, where the minister very publicly got in the way by directing a handful of refugees on to a bus.

Wells would have none of Clare Short's imperious diktats and the committee headed off to the Balkans as planned. But could the real reason for Short's reluctance to allow her fellow parliamentarians to retrace her own steps have anything to do with the government's feeble record in allowing Kosovan refugees to come and stay in Blighty? It would be unhelpful in the extreme for returning MPs to report that Kosovans are being encouraged to go anywhere in Europe — except Britain.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number of deaths and injuries by shooting in US schools in last two years
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US GUN CONTROL

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

IN their haste to appear open and democratic in the fight against the European union's greed and corruption, British MEPs have voted for... one of the most totalitarian legal schemes ever devised by Eurocrats.

The secret plan called *Corpus Juris* calls for the appointment of a European public prosecutor who can order judges in any EU country to arrest anyone *without a public hearing and without evidence*, and transport them to any *other* EU country to await trial for an indeterminate length of time. It was conjured up by the European commission's infamous DGXX without any public debate 18 months ago.

Although it would override British law, British judges and the universally acclaimed British democratic principles of trial by jury and habeas corpus, it was quietly introduced as a magic formula for defeating the EU fraud criminals — neatly forgetting that many of these were themselves Eurocrats.

Even though Britain's two main political parties have publicly stated they would *oppose* the move, in an extraordinary volte-face nearly all Labour and Conservative MEPs supported it on 13 April. Only two Labour members, Alf Lomas and Alex Smith, and one Ulsterman, Jim Nicholson, voted against.

Why? Because, it seems, our MEPs really are as embarrassingly pisspoor and badly organised as everyone makes out and simply don't read the documents they vote on.

Danny Finkelstein at Conservative Central Office confirmed that he had been told by Edward Macmillan-Scott (Conservative group MEP leader) that, as the result of, er, "a mistake" the group all voted "for" when they meant to vote "against". Sneaky eurocrats had apparently concealed *Corpus Juris* in a short list of other measures which confused our MEPs completely. William Hague is to make a statement.

At Millbank, meanwhile, Labour spokesman Terry White said he had no information about matters European but knew a man who did. This was Nick Sigler, the party's "international" expert. "You have caught me cold," he said. "I know nothing about a vote in the European Parliament and how our group might have voted." He did not know what *Corpus Juris* was nor what party policy on it might be.

Britain's home office minister Kate Hoey, who is responsible for EU judicial affairs, wrote to Tory MP Nicholas Soames on 11 November promising that the government would vote against *Corpus Juris*. She claimed the project threatened national sovereignty and human rights, and was reported in *Hansard*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Sun*. Conservative home affairs spokesman James Clappison and Conservative party leader correspondence secretary Ian Philps also declared that party policy was opposed to *Corpus Juris*.

Shame no one told our cosseted MEPs.

Paul Foot

On behalf of Paul Foot, we would like to thank the many friends and Eye readers who have sent messages of support. Paul is out of immediate danger but is still very ill. CLARE AND KATE FERMONT, JOHN, MATT AND TOM FOOT.

Street Of Shame

PRINCE Charles has "thrown his full support" behind Chris Woodhead, the *Sunday Times* revealed last weekend. "Woodhead has been entertained frequently by the prince at Highgrove, Charles's home in Gloucestershire," it reported, "and has stayed overnight there as the prince's guest."

Curiously, the paper forgot to add that Woodhead's companion at many of these brainstorming sessions with Prince Charles is none other than *Sunday Times* columnist Melanie Phillips.

Chris and Melanie are regarded by the prince as the only two voices of sanity in the education debate. Most gratifying for Woodhead, no doubt, but how comfortable does la Phillips feel when she chats to HRH about the need to teach children the *difference* between right and wrong? For, apart from *education, her other presiding* obsession is the sanctity of marriage.

"Adultery or desertion matter, because they destroy families and involve lies, callousness and breach of trust," she wrote recently, attacking Bill Clinton for cheating on his wife. "Public figures are role models, and their behaviour accordingly matters... The moral high ground may have become shrouded in fog, but we still need to get a firm foothold on it."

Does Phillips air these views as she sits in the Highgrove drawing room with two notorious adulterers — one of whom fantasised about being reincarnated as his mistress's Tampax, the other who deserted his wife and small child and shacked up with a teenager?

PS: Melanie Phillips claimed in her column of 18 April that "behind Mrs Woodhead was a trio of Labour party activists", one of whom she identified as Kate Illingworth, a retired teacher from Bristol. An enticing political conspiracy theory, spoiled only by the facts: Kate Illingworth is not a member of the Labour party, and even when she was (for 16 years), she never attended a single branch meeting. However, she did once help deliver a branch newsletter. If this counts as "activism", the Labour party must be in dire straits indeed.

Andrew Osmond

ANDREW OSMOND, one of the founding fathers of *Private Eye*, died of a brain tumour on April 14 aged 61. Not only did Andrew contribute the £450 capital on which the *Eye* was started in 1961, he was the man who thought up the title and whose high spirits and enthusiasm were vital in getting the project launched. Although a naturally funny man, Andrew preferred to remain in the background, claiming that he only ever submitted one joke to the *Eye* in the form of a spoof advertisement: "Losing the hair in your ears? Try ear-wigs!"

As an Oxford undergraduate, Andrew contributed to the *Eye*'s forerunners *Parson's Pleasure* and *Mesopotamia*. He combined an acute business brain with sensitive literary and critical skills. After selling the *Eye* to Peter Cook and his partner Nicholas Luard, Andrew pursued a short-lived career in the Foreign Office, but returned to the *Eye* as part-time business manager in 1969. He set up a valuable book publishing partnership with Andre Deutsch and realising the value of subscriptions, masterminded a major subs drive with a variety of special offers. The result was a welcome boost in circulation. Later, his devoted wife Stuart took over as subscriptions manager.

Although he resigned the Managing Directorship in 1972 and, in a typically generous gesture, gave away his remaining shares, Andrew never lost touch with the *Eye*. He remained an invaluable friend to many members of the staff as well as a trusted adviser to the business side (the "boxwallahs"). Nicknamed "Tiny" on account of his business flair, he was especially helpful in the long-running Goldenballs campaign of '75-'76 and did his best to settle the acrimonious disputes that accompanied the publication of Patrick Marnham's history of the magazine in 1982.

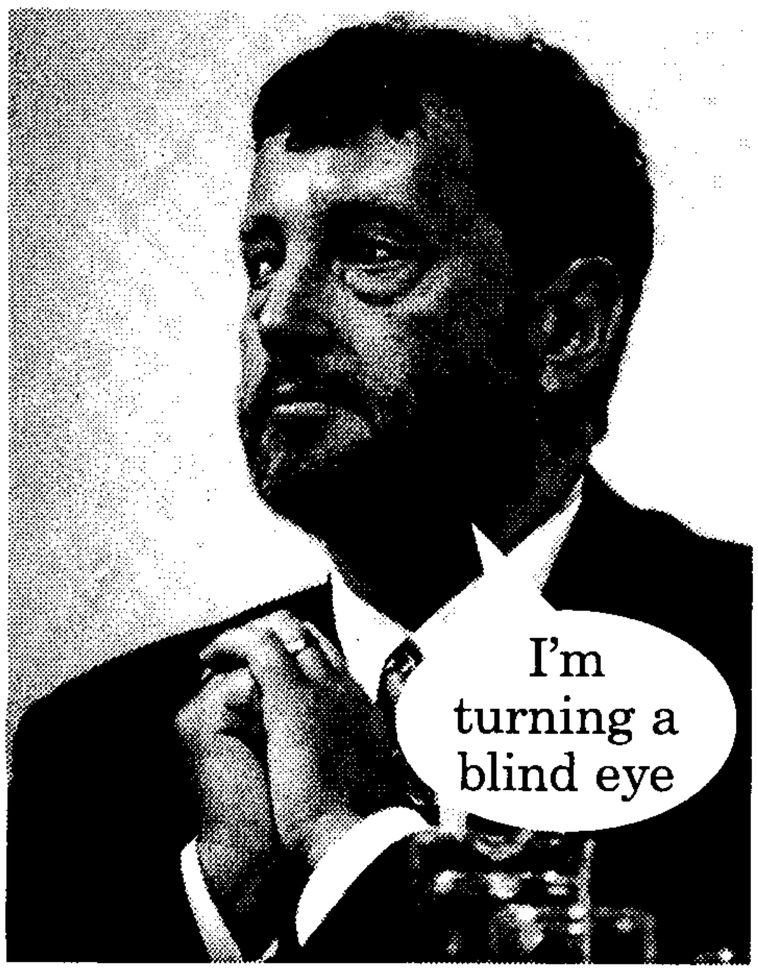
Not all of Andrew's interventions however were so successful. When his fellow Old Harrovian Lord Bethell was suing the *Eye*, Andrew offered to negotiate a settlement. Having drafted an ultimatum, he decided he would telephone Bethell very early in the morning and catch him off his guard. But when the drowsy peer answered the phone Andrew was overcome by panic and found himself quite unable to speak.

Andrew was not only a good critic, he had an inside knowledge of the publishing world, having been himself an author as well as a successful bookseller. He contributed to our series *Great Bestsellers of the World* (a forerunner of *Literary Review*) with profiles of Jeffrey Archer, Len Deighton and others. One of these pieces was a savage attack on the military pundit General Sir John Hackett who, stung by the description of himself as a pompous pedant — "the most conceited man in public life" — fired off a lengthy letter of complaint. It then must have struck him that the letter merely confirmed what Andrew had written and he rang me on Press Day asking for it to be shortened. I assured him that we liked it in its original form and the General's letter, under the heading "An Old Bore Writes", was probably the longest ever published in the *Eye*.

The *Eye* owes a great debt of gratitude to Andrew and he will be sorely missed by all those of us who were lucky enough to have been his friends.

Richard Ingrams

BLUNKETT ON WOODHEAD



EDUCASHUN

"Labour is totally committed to offering the opportunity of an excellent education to all of our children, not just to those of a priviledged [*sic*] minority."

— Election campaign leaflet from Connie McCarthy, Labour candidate for Manor ward, Liverpool, on 6 May

IN a recent edition of XCITY, the newsletter of City University journalism department, *Daily Mail* diarist Nigel Pratt-Dumpster granted an interview in which he was asked what advice he would offer aspiring journalists.

"I think get a good grounding," he declared. "Because what I've noticed is that people come into this profession with very little knowledge of what it demands — accuracy, checking, that sort of thing."

Yet only a few days after XCITY was mailed out, the *Mail* carried a brief announcement — not on Dempster's pisspoor page but hidden away on the left-hand outside edge of page 20. Under the heading "Patricia Kluge", it recorded the fact that the *Mail* had been obliged to pay damages and apologise for a series of articles in Dempster's Diary last August, which had falsely claimed that the multimillionairess Patricia Kluge had had an affair with a former bodyguard and that when the affair had ended she had spitefully set him up for the murder of a jeweller.

Dumpster told colleagues of his relief that editor Paul Dacre was on holiday when the humiliating apology appeared and he must be hoping Dacre will overlook the little matter of £150,000 libel damages paid to Kluge.

HOPING to steal a march on the *Sunday Times*'s Rich List, the *Observer* recently produced The Young Rich, a "comprehensive" guide to the nation's wealthiest young entrepreneurs.

And what an exotic crew they were. The list included two convicted drug dealers — William Cressy, 26, and Jason Vella, 27, who are serving 11 and 17 year jail sentences. They were said to be worth £4m and £2m respectively, though the *Observer* failed to mention what evidence it had for these figures. Guesswork, perchance?

The broad-brush approach was equally evident in an extended puff for the 23-year-old party organiser Justin Etzin, who was valued at £2m because of "increasingly lucrative events for the likes of Gucci, BT and Coca-Cola where he rakes in most of the money". *Observer* hack Tom O'Sullivan noted that Etzin claims a turnover of £1.5m a year for his main company, Capital VIP Promotions, even though the most recent figures at Companies House show a turnover of just £50,000. But the diligent O'Sullivan somehow failed to spot another suggestive document at Companies House, which reveals that one of Etzin's previous companies, Capital VIP Group Ltd, was wound up in September 1997 with debts of £131,490. The single largest creditor — owed £24,000 — was, er, Coca-Cola.

Gluttons for punishment who watched *Britain's Richest* on ITV the following day would have noticed that Etzin's fortune had somehow trebled overnight — from £2m in the *Observer* on Sunday to £6m by Monday. The programme, allegedly an "ITN Factual" production, featured Etzin in the Seychelles. "London is where he makes it but the Seychelles is where he spends it!" drooled the commentary, over footage of the young tycoon water-skiing, snorkelling and quaffing champagne in a jacuzzi.

"Even on holiday, Justin can't resist an opportunity to make even more money." Justin, viewers were told, had bought the derelict Vista Bay Hotel, which is presently a "bit of a dump" but will soon be converted into a luxury five-star pleasure-dome. The *Seychelles Nation*, a local newspaper, put a rather less glamorous spin on the story. On 1 March it reported that Etzin and his father, Bernard, had managed to "stall the proposed sale" of their property by travelling to the Seychelles "to settle outstanding bills incurred by Vista Bay Hotel, which would have been auctioned on Monday 8 February".

Still, *Seychelles Nation* did eventually get "on message", breathlessly revealing that Justin has 10 GCSEs and three A levels.

PS: Rumour has it that Etzin is now going out with Jonathan Aitken's daughter Alexandra. No doubt Justin can give Jonathan much useful advice about the importance of telling the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth.

Street of Shame

WHY are the hacks who expose poor standards in schools invariably left with a black mark against their own name too?

The latest to sit in the corner in a dunce's cap is the *Times*, one of whose freelances recently wrote a piece quoting the hilarious mistakes GCSE students have made in recent exams. One pupil apparently wrote that Sir Francis Drake circumcised the world with a 100ft clipper. Another said Joan of Arc was burned to a steak.

Hackette Diana Blamires confronted the department for education with these poor results, and the DfEE declared a policy of zero tolerance. But Blamires failed to mention that these "recent" exams were in fact taken in the 1930s in America and had already been published in Frank M. Richmond's *School Yarns and Howlers* in 1934.

Christian Fraser of the *Mirror* made exactly the same mistake last year.

DAVID MELLOR's transformation from MP to sporting journalist is nearing completion now that he's stopped checking his facts.

In his fever Mellor recently deduced that Crystal Palace is in the pocket of Donald Trump after hearing that it had borrowed money from a company called Trump Oil.

In fact Trump Oil does not exist but Tramp Oil does. Mellor did not realise that Palace's connection with the company is through its director Christian Carsson, who works for Tramp Oil.

HEADLINE writers at the *Independent on Sunday* got carried away when the Brixton bomb went off, injuring 40 people.

The heading on the main story screamed "London bomb carnage", but the subs' fever was quickly dampened when it was pointed out that although some people were badly hurt in the blast, to call it "carnage", when people were dying nightmarish deaths in Kosovo every day, displayed rather distorted news values.

Later editions ran with Kosovo as the main story and the London attack under the more subdued headline "shoppers hurt in Brixton bomb".

JUST FANCY THAT!

"On Wednesday, the Deputy Prime Minister made such a comprehensive ass of himself in answering parliamentary questions that most of us thought we were attending a theatrical farce..."

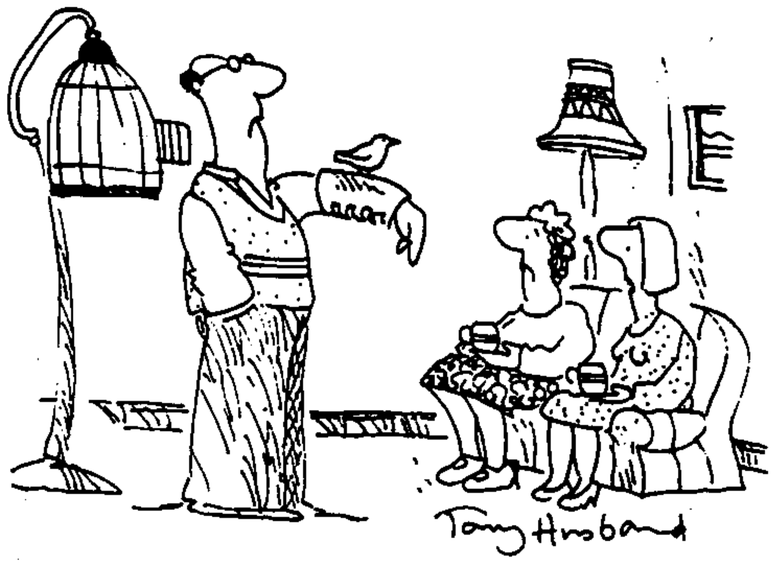
— *Sunday Express*, 18 April, page 25

"John Prescott's personal humanitarian disaster at Prime Minister's Questions..."

— *Sunday Express*, 18 April, page 37

"John Prescott's performance answering questions in the absence of Tony Blair has been much mocked and ridiculed... It says everything about the over-educated metropolitan press corps that they mocked this honest man who is instinctively trusted and respected by ordinary decent people."

— *Sunday Express*, 18 April, page 39



"George likes to pretend the canary's a hawk"

PROVINCIAL newspaper millionaire Chris Oakley, chief executive of Regional Independent Media (RIM), was all over his flagship *Yorkshire Post* newspaper when Prince Charles arrived to launch a literary scheme.

Funny, isn't it, how the great, the good and the wealthy become interested in education when there's the chance of a photo-opportunity? Chris Oakley showed his commitment to educational standards earlier this year when he generously pledged £30,000 of his company's funds to help a journalism training course at the University of Central Lancashire.

Entirely coincidentally, this act of charity came just a few weeks after Oakley was made an honorary fellow of... the University of Central Lancashire.

THAT JOHN McCARTHY WEDDING IN FULL

"John McCarthy, 43, the journalist held hostage in Beirut for five years, was married to Anna Ottewill, 32, a BBC publications editor, at St Mary Church in Bepton, West Sussex. Jill Morrell, his former girlfriend, was not present."

— *The Times*

"Jill Morrell, who campaigned tirelessly for his release, [was] among the guests at St Mary's Church, in Bepton."

— London *Evening Standard*

"Jill Morrell, Mr McCarthy's former girlfriend who campaigned for his release during his five-year ordeal, was not present."

— *Daily Telegraph*

"His former love Jill Morrell was among the guests..."

— *Daily Mail*

***EVENING Standard* cartoonist "Blower" was quick to react to news that the Metropolitan police were campaigning to recruit more members of ethnic minorities.**

He dashed off a picture for the first edition on 15 April depicting a threatening looking group of truncheon-wielding Knackers bearing down on a black man.

The Met is not the only London institution to be worried about accusations of institutional racism, however. Later editions of the *Standard* carried a slightly different version of the cartoon. The black man in the first was dreadlocked, Jagger-lipped and wearing a tracksuit. Resembling nothing less than the Robinson's golly, he was pictured fleeing the police in terror. By later editions he was a short-haired, suit-wearing, respectable-looking chap who was casually strolling along the pavement.

LONDON marathon enthusiasts who read the *Times* the Monday before the race could have been excused for not knowing if they were coming or going.

The paper's 15-page pull-out — rich in detail about the 500 portable toilets that would be available on the day and the 32,000 sandwiches that would be on sale — managed to avoid any mention of when the event would actually take place.

KOSOVO CAMPAIGN MEDALS

A SPECIAL award for tastelessness beyond the call of duty goes to the *Sunday Telegraph*'s Mandrake column.

It reported that Tory MP Sir Peter Tapsell was at the centre of a battle between two schools in Horncastle which both wanted him to draw a picture for a charity art-show. As Tapsell told the *Torygraph*: "Kosovo and Albania have nothing on the rivalry between adjoining villages in my constituency."

Meanwhile a mention in dispatches for the *Western Morning News*, which is keeping a fine sense of proportion. Its front page of 2 April was dominated by the huge headline "Kosovo Threat to Air Spectacular". What dire threat was this? Er, the departure of RAF planes to the Balkans might jeopardise an air-show in Cornwall which had been planned to coincide with the summer solar eclipse.

At the *Sun*, an award for consistent confusion seems to be in order. Having declared that sending troops into Kosovo would be "MADNESS", the

"I wish there was a news blackout in this country"

Sun's own leader writer stated more clearly recently that "the world has to pull out all the stops to help the Kosovan refugees. That is why Tony Blair and Bill Clinton are right to talk about sending extra troops to the region."

Perhaps suddenly recalling the paper's line on the war, the leader then reaffirmed that ground troops were still not on the agenda. Recalling the paper's general jingoism, however, it then adds: "Whatever British forces are asked to do, they will have the *Sun*'s total support." So at least that's clear.

MODESTY UPDATE

"Eleven years ago, David Hillman redesigned the Guardian. It sounds simple, but his changes were to have a profound effect on this newspaper and its competitors... The latest changes to the Guardian [are] introduced today... The text font, Miller, designed by Matthew Carter in Boston, is already used in G2, but has been redrawn for the broadsheet. The aim is for the font to be more readable without increasing the size. The grid — the columns on the page — also changes, depending on the story... The centre of the paper has one of the most noticeable innovations, the creation of a distinct comment and analysis section... Such simplicity, one feels, would impress David Hillman."

— Extracts from ten-column inch "news story" on page six of the *Guardian*, which took precedence over the Brixton bomb and the Scottish elections

POLICE 5

DAPPER Norman Bettison, Murkeyside's new chief constable who favours full dress uniform for official functions and well-tailored suits the rest of the time, is a lot smarter than his force.

On 16 April some of his blundering knackers managed to leave a secret document containing details of 20 suspected drug dealers in a hire car.

Meanwhile, it seems that his local coppers are not only keen on downloading pornography from the internet for themselves (*Eye* 973) but quite prepared to use it as part of a young offenders' programme.

When two 12-year-old truants were taken to a local cop shop recently, they were put into the station rest room to await their parents. The TV was on — and playing a porn video. An officer then came in and watched for 10 minutes before realising there were two children at the back of the room and switching it off.

LONDON police chief Sir Paul Condon is hitting all the "new" Labour buttons as he tries to shore up his position after the disgrace of the MacPherson report.

The Met has hired Blairite PR firm Hobsbawm Macaulay, run by Gordon Brown's girlfriend, to dispel the impression that police officers are racist, corrupt or downright incompetent.

Hobsbawm Macaulay's first stunt was to stage a "forum" in Westminster Central Hall, chaired by Blairite mayoral candidate Trevor Phillips. If the Met had put half the effort into catching the Lawrence killers that is now being wasted on this PR campaign, there might even have been a result.

IN THE TEAROOM

IT has finally dawned on the parliamentary Conservative party that the only way it is going to get back into office under the leadership of William Hague is if Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, Jack Straw and Mo Mowlam are all run over by the same Number 11 bus.

This is encouraging for Conservatives in the country, as it is the first hard evidence that the party's prolonged "listening to Britain" exercise has worked and Tory politicians are at last aligning their thinking with the opinions of ordinary voters.

Two events have convinced them. First, there was the daft relaunching of the leader as Bill Bloke, Man of the People. The one thing William Hague doesn't lack is the common touch. If that were the key to political success in today's Britain, John Prescott would be prime minister. Amanda Platell's job is to give Hague a life less ordinary. Instead, all she's given him is a Bruce Willis haircut.

Then came that Peter Lilley speech. Timed to cause maximum party division by coinciding with the Thatcher anniversary knees-up, it was not only a repudiation of the party's core philosophy but, more importantly, it was a repudiation of Alan Duncan.

Hague owes everything to his former flatmate and Oxford crony. It was Duncan who managed his leadership campaign, Duncan who secured the crucial support of Michael Portillo and Margaret Thatcher.

Since his demotion after an admittedly pisspoor performance as party spin doctor, Duncan has been encouraged to be the party's ideas man. His two big ideas — getting more money into health through an expansion of the private sector, and ending the state monopoly in education to provide pluralism and choice — are the only Tory policies that will fly. Duncan, an astute fixer, together with like-minded colleagues, now has no option but to plot the return and succession of Portillo.

Meanwhile the party's left and soft centre has begun to dream of a Chris Patten comeback. John Major is well placed to secure his old chum's return by demanding immediate translation to the Lords, handing Patten Huntingdon, one of the safest seats in the country. That's if Tony Blair doesn't neatly finesse the plan by phoning his new best friend Romano Prodi and arranging for Patten to be conveniently diverted to Brussels. That would leave the Tories with a stark choice: Portillo... or oblivion.

'Urquhart'

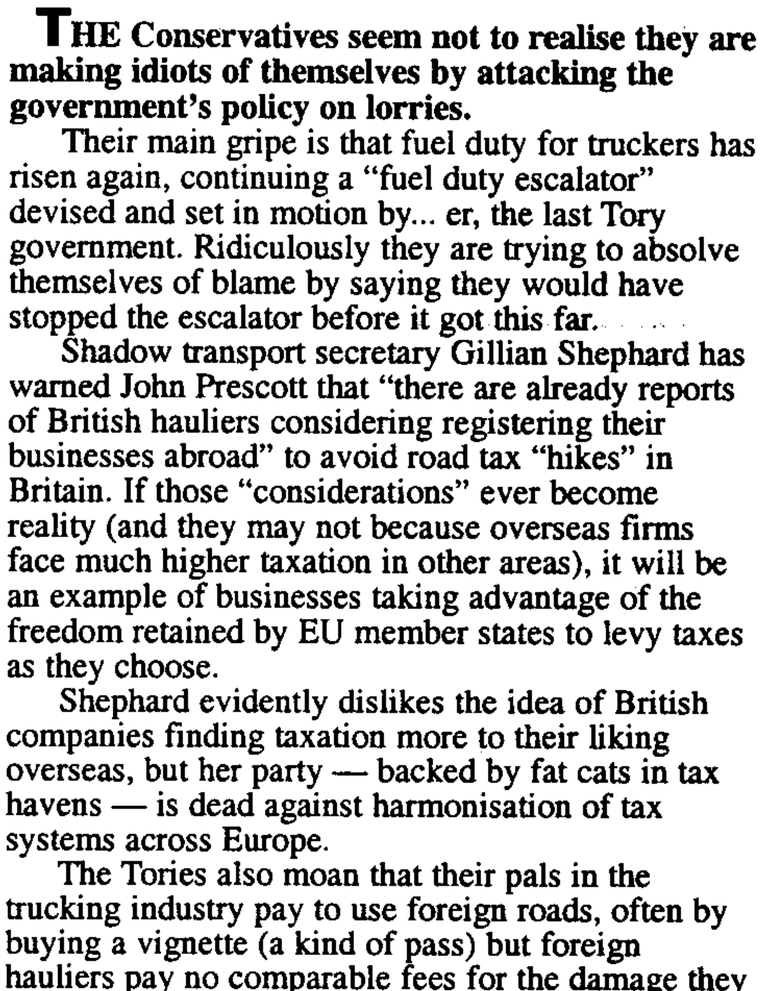
LET no one doubt that the leader of the Conservative party has his finger on the pulse of international politics.

As the night sky over Belgrade blazed last week, William Hague was poised to deal with the crisis of, er, planning permission for the Holiday Inn in Weston Super Mare.

"Hague flies in to probe planners" was the local paper's banner headline, detailing how the Tory leader was planning to "fly in by helicopter to meet with local businessmen who are angry at the actions of North Somerset council's planning department".

Weston's Conservative Association, still smarting from the loss of the blue-rinse safe seat to the Lib Dems at the last election, was breathless with anticipation, though chairman Mike Rowe did warn the North Somerset *Mercury* that "obviously these things can change at very short notice, such as something dramatic happening in Kosovo".

And so it came to pass... on the day Milosevic stepped up his shellings of the last enclaves in Kosovo and Nato admitted responsibility for bombing refugee convoys, bad weather diverted William Hague to the Midlands, leaving Weston's planners cruelly unprobed.


HARD CHOICES
£1.5 billion
cost of rebuilding the Balkans when the bombing is over
£15 billion
cost of building the Eurofighter in case we want to do it again
EURO-WAR

THE Conservatives seem not to realise they are making idiots of themselves by attacking the government's policy on lorries.

Their main gripe is that fuel duty for truckers has risen again, continuing a "fuel duty escalator" devised and set in motion by... er, the last Tory government. Ridiculously they are trying to absolve themselves of blame by saying they would have stopped the escalator before it got this far.

Shadow transport secretary Gillian Shephard has warned John Prescott that "there are already reports of British hauliers considering registering their businesses abroad" to avoid road tax "hikes" in Britain. If those "considerations" ever become reality (and they may not because overseas firms face much higher taxation in other areas), it will be an example of businesses taking advantage of the freedom retained by EU member states to levy taxes as they choose.

Shephard evidently dislikes the idea of British companies finding taxation more to their liking overseas, but her party — backed by fat cats in tax havens — is dead against harmonisation of tax systems across Europe.

The Tories also moan that their pals in the trucking industry pay to use foreign roads, often by buying a vignette (a kind of pass) but foreign hauliers pay no comparable fees for the damage they inflict on British roads. Proposals for a British vignette, payable by all foreign truckers coming here, were rejected by the Tory government. But that trifling detail has not stopped the Tories demanding a British vignette from the current government.

The Tories' defence of hauliers shows brazen double standards compared with their policies on other transport sectors while in government. Shephard is horrified that some UK hauliers may "flag out" to France or elsewhere, yet it was her government that transferred about 95 percent of British rail freight to American ownership. The last Tory government also rammed through reforms that theoretically give foreign rail companies open access to British tracks — while foreign tracks remain no-go areas for British operators — and put one of the world's busiest commuter rail networks into the hands of a French utility (Vivendi, owner of Connex).

THE pressure is getting to Labour in Scotland as MPs appear to crack and snap when subjected to that most irritating of events — questions from the public.

Candidates for the Scottish assembly watched open-mouthed last Thursday as Sam Galbraith, MP for Strathkelvin and Bearsden and a junior minister at the Scottish office, laid into someone who had asked about the safety of his job under Labour.

Tam Waterson, who works at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary and is Unison's secretary, asked what would happen under the private finance initiative (PFI) agreed at the hospital last August.

Galbraith muttered on about frameworks and negotiation. But when Waterson pointed out that the private sector partner, Consort Healthcare, was not interested in Labour's framework, Galbraith appeared to lose control and told Waterson to spend less time representing people and more time on his own job.

LABOUR continues to silence even the slightest expressions of discontent in the campaign for the Welsh assembly.

Having closed its own internet Open Forum when awkward questions were asked about funding and democracy (see *Eye* 970), the cyber-debate over the assembly building moved to the website of the *Western Mail*. This is not the first off-message move by the Welsh morning paper, which is fast attaining John Simpson-style status with Labour.

During a recent school visit Welsh secretary Alun Michael was accosted by youthful Hagueite David Davies, a candidate for Monmouth and chief of staff to the faceless leader of the Welsh Conservatives, Rod Richards. As a photographer snapped away, Davies attempted to present Michael with a copy of Sandie Shaw's *Puppet on a String* — the Tories being nothing if not up-to-date with their satire.

Blair's puppet Welsh secretary simply snarled at Davies to "grow up" and continued on his way. Standard election campaign fare, you might think. But moments later Davies was approached by a school governor who demanded the negatives from the camera, claiming to have "the authority of the secretary of state".

The brave Davies stood firm... er, by immediately handing over the film. But a *Western Mail* photographer had also captured the moment, which was duly splashed across the paper as "the picture Alun Michael does not want you to see". Another triumph of "new" Labour's brilliant public relations assault on Wales.

Number crunching

1p ■ SNP's addition to income tax for Scottish election

10% ■ SNP's loss in polls for Scottish election

FORMER Labour whip Sir Ray Powell has been up to his old tricks again (see *Eyes passim*).

The wily old Welsh backbencher was bollocked by an upstart replacement recently for leaving parliament early. But when Powell repeated the offence the following day, his crime brought about an even more savage denunciation.

As the threats of punishment grew ever louder in intensity, Powell pointed to his ear. "Look you silly bastard, can't you see I wear a bloody hearing aid. I haven't and I can't hear a bloody thing you are saying."

Powell is increasingly being given a wide berth by the control freak tendency.

TORY leader William Hague has at last found a place to dump those notorious young Tories who refuse to relinquish the party's image as a bunch of upper-class reactionaries: the Scottish assembly.

Eye readers will recall Brian Monteith as the unpleasant young Tory who chaired the disgraceful and eventually disgraced Federation of Conservative Students (FCS) in the 1980s (*Eye* 558), an organisation slightly to the right of Alf Garnett. Now Monteith is... a prime candidate in the assembly contest.

'Backbiter'

EYE TV

The next BBC director-general

THE financial success of London Weekend Television — from which the current chairman, DG and putative next DG of the BBC all hail — was largely built on the popularity of Cilla Black's *Blind Date*. And so perhaps, in the interests of the accessibility and openness in which television is now supposed to believe, BBC chairman Sir Christopher Bland should perhaps conduct the search for a replacement for Sir John Birt as an episode of the dating show.

"What would you show me on a weekend In London?" asks Sir Chris. From behind the screen, contestant number one — whom the viewers can see is small, scruffy, balding, bearded — answers: "I'd take you with my friends Mel Brooks and Lenny and Dawn to the Saatchi Gallery extension!" Contestant number two — also small, scruffy, balding, bearded — archly replies: "A weekend In London? I'd switch on London Weekend Television!"

A beaming Sir Chris declares "I fancy number two!" before asking his second question: "Imagine I'm a Labour leader. I'm likely to become prime minister. I ask you to help fund my campaign. What do you do?" Contestant number one mumbles: "That's a tricky decision. Can I put it off for a year or two?" Contestant number two replies: "Who shall I make the cheque out to, mate?"

In the last week, the answer of contestant number two (Greg Dyke) to the second question has severely lengthened his odds on being reunited with his former LWT boss at the BBC. Although the campaign by the *Times* newspaper against him is essentially grubby revenge (Dyke opposed the Sky takeover of Manchester United), the view that his financial contributions to Labour rules him out as DG has been taken seriously by BBC governors and non-Murdoch commentators. This means that, in a comeback to match Man Utd's against Juventus, contestant number one (Alan Yentob) is the new favourite, only two years after a Birt reshuffle was believed to have marginalised him in a non-job.

But the real case against Dyke as DG is not that he is too close to Blair but that he is too far away from the BBC. One of the mysteries of television is why, since the 1980s, Britain's public service broadcaster has been dominated by figures from the most jollily populist of ITV companies: Grade, Birt, Bland and now, if Bland has his way, Dyke.

At least Grade and Birt graduated from an LWT which founded *The South Bank Show* and *Weekend World* and commissioned numerous expensive plays from Dennis Potter and Alan Bennett. The new commissions in the LWT of Bland and Dyke were game shows, sitcoms and other ratings-chasers. The company survived the last ITV franchise round largely because Thatch had put out orders for the removal of Thames (which had offended with *Death On The Rock*) and it was thought impractical to kick out both London companies at once.

Before that Dyke was famous only for saving TV-am by plunging it downmarket. This was a significant commercial achievement but what has he ever done to show an understanding of public service broadcasting or the licence fee? What the governors should worry about is not his links with the government but his past connections with Roland Rat.

The case against Botney is the one that has plagued him throughout his executive career: a reputation for indecision and the charge that his main interest in paperwork is shuffling party invitations from the famous. This concern, though, could be countered by installing beneath him a deputy director-general happy to take on the bureaucratic functions while the DG makes the case at Westminster and elsewhere and schmoozes the creative talent.

A man who has overcome a reputation for mumbling to become an effective public speaker (including a recent well-timed address about taking the corporation upmarket), he also had the unique distinction among the field of having been a successful controller of both BBC1 and BBC2. His biggest problem now is the risk of a Dyke-like "croneyism" charge over his involvement in the millennium dome.

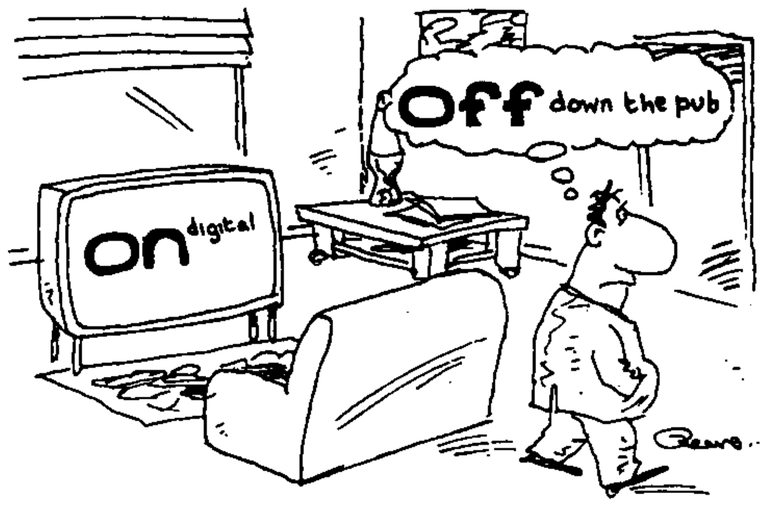
As for the rest of the field, the two Marks — Byford of World Service and Thompson of regional programmes and ex-BBC2 — are both too young for this round but might be good deputies for Botney. Head news wonk Tony Hall has weakened his case with a badly-handled revamping of BBC news shows.

Which leaves two more. It was once famously said of the former Murdoch journalist Jonathan Miller that the only people who ever had a good word to say for him thought he was the other Jonathan Miller. The same is true, in BBC terms, of Richard Eyre, the current boss of ITV, regularly mentioned in the press as a strong candidate.

Any BBC staff suggesting to media editors that Richard Eyre might be a good idea are almost certainly thinking of the other one, who successfully ran the National Theatre and is now a BBC governor. But, although the shade of Evelyn Waugh might be amused by someone ending up running the BBC because they had the same name as someone else, viewers and listeners wouldn't.

And David "Two Brains" Elstein, feeling wasted at Channel 5, recently used a BBC seminar to reveal that, despite his long intellectual opposition to the licence fee, he had suddenly found he believed in it. This has been widely seen in TV as "David ruling himself in for DG". But come off it. BBC current affairs presenters spent at least half of all interviews mocking politicians for tiny shifts in belief across their entire adult lives: "Hah, minister, you didn't seem to think that in 1983!" Could the same organisation really have as editor-in-chief a man who had abandoned his beliefs so cynically?

'Square Eyes'



MEDIA NEWS

ITV's new current affairs flagship *Tonight With Trevor McDonald* is already proving a ratings and PR disaster for the Anderson brothers, the family team who did away with its respected predecessor *World in Action*.

The first *Tonight* — the notorious Martin Bashir interview with the Stephen Lawrence murder suspects — won 4.7m viewers. Not too bad for a current affairs show, but few get as much pre-publicity as this one did.

The second edition, minus the hype, got a mere 3.4m, representing just 18 percent share of the total TV audience for that night. By a fascinating coincidence, this is precisely the figure that, when hit by *World in Action*, was deemed "unacceptable" by Steve Anderson, ITV's network centre current affairs supremo. No doubt he has already told the editor of *Tonight* — his brother Jeff — to get his act together.

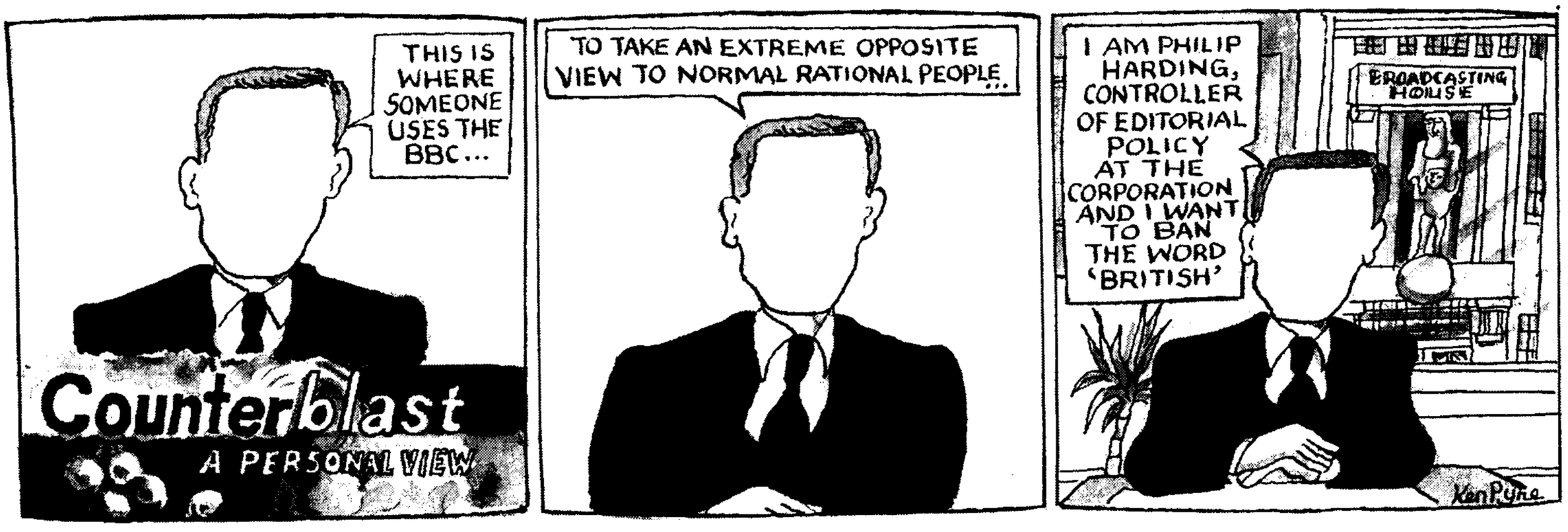
MEANWHILE the mystery deepens over who paid for the Lawrence Five's agreeable fortnight in Perthshire following their interviews with Bashir for *Tonight*.

Granada categorically denies paying for anything other than accommodation. But there is another version of the Scottish jaunt. According to this, the five were shown brochures for destinations in Ireland, Wales and Scotland, and chose Hennhill House, a converted farmhouse near Perth.

They were driven individually in luxury cars — Jaguars and Mercedes — from the interview location in Devon to Perthshire "like a secret service operation". While there they had use of a "people carrier" vehicle and a driver, supplied by a local hire company acting for a London travel firm which was itself retained by Granada. Excursions included seven rounds of golf, one fly-fishing trip, a St Johnstone vs Rangers soccer match, one visit to a go-karting track and sightseeing trips to the William Wallace monument and Pitlochrie.

Gary Dobson and Luke Knight were provided with new sets of Ping golf clubs, but the other three were not because they already owned clubs. The driver paid for all these outings, plus groceries from Asda in Perth. The five paid for their own supplies of beer; but had each received £230 cash for general expenses — out of which the beer was paid for.

Granada spokesman Mike Large told the *Eye* this version of events was "absolutely ridiculous", although he conceded that the five had indeed been driven to Scotland in individual cars "to prevent contamination" after each interview. "We paid for accommodation and that was it," said Large. "You can take Granada's word or not. It's up to you."


THIS IS WHERE SOMEONE USES THE BBC...
Counterblast
A PERSONAL VIEW
TO TAKE AN EXTREME OPPOSITE VIEW TO NORMAL RATIONAL PEOPLE...
I AM PHILIP HARDING, CONTROLLER OF EDITORIAL POLICY AT THE CORPORATION AND I WANT TO BAN THE WORD 'BRITISH'
BROADCASTING HOUSE
Ken Pyne

WHEN Carla and Greg Cordell announced their three-month "blind date" marriage, arranged by a Birmingham radio station, was over, they blamed media intrusion for its collapse — making the statement in an ITV fly-on-the-wall documentary.

Although the couple were quick to condemn the tabloids who bought up "love rat" Greg's supposed conquests, they had nothing but praise for BRMB, the Birmingham broadcaster who had staged the big publicity stunt early this year.

If the couple did harbour criticisms of the station, they were not aired in the two-part documentary. Neither did the Carlton programmes feature any reaction from BRMB bosses on the failure of their project — not even a comment from station director Julie Fair, who happens ("by a complete default", says BRMB) to be married to the documentary's director David Fair.

RUMOURS that the Cannes film festival will be a celebrity washout upstaged by the new *Star Wars* flick have been greatly exaggerated. One international megastar who *has* pledged to attend is... Mohamed Fayed.

Fayed will be docking his yacht and "doing" Cannes in style to publicise his momentary appearance in the forthcoming film of Kathy Lette's novel *Mad Cows*. Parts of the film were shot at Harrods and the phoney pharaoh graciously agreed to appear on screen in cameo as a shop doorman.

One source of potential embarrassment at the festival, however, will be the presence of Winona Ryder. In 1996 the actress was romantically linked with the pharaoh's playboy son Dodi by diarist Nigel Pratt-Dumpster. Unfortunately for Dumpster, Ryder pointed out that this was simply untrue. But flat denials have never put off the pharaoh, and a year later he told the *Express*: "He was leading his own life, but we kept in close touch. He was enjoying himself dating actresses like Brooke Shields and Winona Ryder."

Since Fayed's "close touch" with his son during the 1980s involved several years of refusing to talk to him, it is not surprising he was reduced to peddling false stories from the gossip columns. At the time he claimed the dalliance occurred, however, Ryder was a mere 14-years-old. No doubt Ryder and her actor boyfriend Matt Damon will have much to discuss with Fayed should they meet on the Croisette.

A NEW series of *They Think It's All Over* brings a scathing review from *Sunday Mirror* TV critic Ian Hyland.

But did Hyland actually watch the programme he was supposedly reviewing? A few days before transmission the BBC put out a press release mentioning a new round called Temper, Temper, and Hyland's review duly notes "a mildly amusing new round called Temper, Temper" — unaware the feature was dropped from the first programme to make room for a joke about Robbie Fowler.

BBC1 continued its Sunday night cheap 'n' cheerful clipfest (*shurely "another chance to see an array of interesting out-takes from the BBC archive"? Ed.*) with *Auntie's Natural Bloomers*.

One probably unintended blooper in the repeat was the appearance of convicted chimp-beater and circus owner Mary Chipperfield boasting to Johnny Morris of how she had trained an incontinent elephant to stand on its hind legs.

Plugged In

Chris Evans was fuming yesterday after BA made him miss Arsenal's clash with Man United. He tells me: "I arrived at their first class lounge at Heathrow early to watch it. I'd asked if they had Sky but it wasn't on. Seems they hadn't paid the bill. I did my nut!"

DOMINIC MOHAN's Bizarre page
The Sun

An occasional column devoted to cross-media plugs masquerading as news.

HACKWATCH

The Times Dreary

NO FALSE modesty afflicts Michael Gove, the boyish and bumptious editor of the *Times*'s op-ed page. In a recent article he praised the "18th-century pamphleteering vigour" of his paper, which he described as a bastion of "free-thinking" and "cock-snooking" (so much better than dull old snook-cocking).

The one feature that appears daily on Gove's page is the *Times* Diary, written by the free-thinking Messrs Jasper Gerard and Edward Welsh. Here are a few snooks that they have fearlessly cocked:

4 March: Australian chanteuse and sometime soap-actress Natalie Imbruglia will take part in a celebrity motor-race before this weekend's grand prix. "I don't know if I'm a danger to anyone, but this is going to be lots of fun," she confides.

5 March: Saucer-eyed model Sophie Dahl hopes to visit India. "All my student companions do the travelling thing," she sighs, "but I missed out because I work so hard."

9 March: Superwaif Jodie Kidd reveals why she and her siblings were all given names starting with the letter J. "It was thought sensible that my brother Jack, sister Jemma and I have names with J as horse blankets and boxes are so expensive to have embroidered and repainted," she explains.

12 March: What colour pyjamas does William Hague wear? When asked, as politicians are these days, the Tory leader confesses that he wears nothing in bed. "Lucky Ffion," the diary coos.

13 March: New York hairdresser John Barrett, who "tends the tonsorial needs of Jennifer Aniston and friends", is visiting London for three days. After that, the diary reveals, the celebrity crimper will fly off to Los Angeles for the Oscars.

16 March: Staff at the Savoy Grill may be allowed to use their discretion in deciding whether to serve male customers who aren't wearing ties. "It is deplorable," thunders Nicholas Soames MP, a regular.

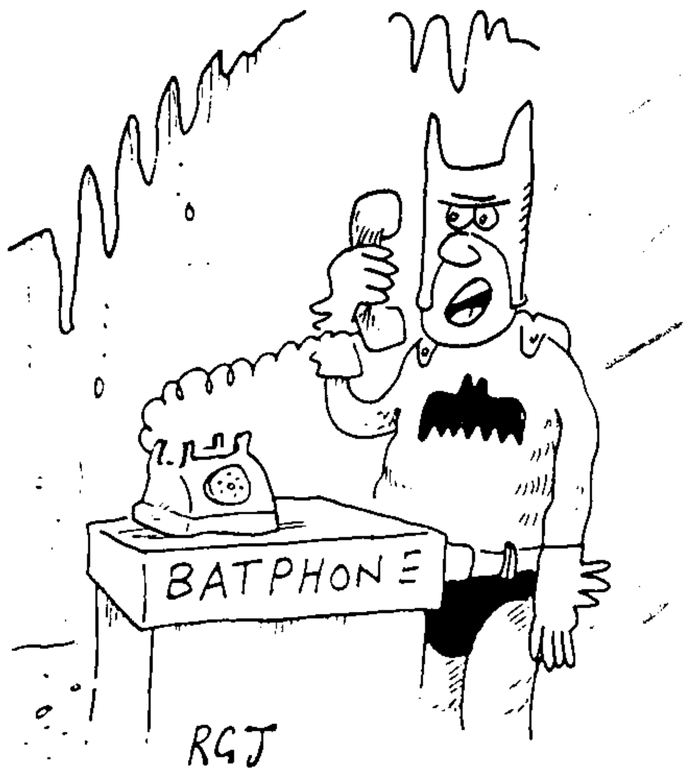
20 March: To celebrate the birthday of her daughter Princess Eugenie, the Duchess of York will be taking Eugenie, her sister Beatrice and about 20 other youngsters to Planet Hollywood for a preview of *The Rugrats Movie*.

22 March: Norman Baker MP is launching a campaign to make the lifts at the House of Commons go faster. "Unless you are one-legged, it is quicker to walk," he quips.

23 March: Another bulletin from Westminster. "The Sergeant at Arms was mistaken when he persuaded the new Speaker's chaplain to give up his dresser," the diary complains. "Canon Peter Jennings persuaded Robert Wright to dispense with one of the perks of the job after suggesting it was a peculiarity of his predecessor. But the Speaker's chaplain has had a dresser since time immemorial. Importantly, the flunkey helps the cleric with his black cassock, cape and pointy hat before swishing towards the chamber." Importantly indeed.

24 March: Tony Blair's train last weekend was 15 minutes late leaving Darlington. But there's a happy ending: "When they eventually pulled into Stevenage — the nearest stop for Chequers — it was just 30 seconds late."

30 March: "Behind every great supermum is a great nanny," the diary observes. "So imagine the crisis for Nicola Horlick as her nanny of 10 years' standing quits." Unimaginable, eh?



"No, I don't want to buy a kitchen... How did you get this number?"

31 March: Wayne Sleep, the dancer, has sprained his ankle while swimming off the coast of Florida.

1 April: Ian Maxwell, son of Robert, is to marry art student Tara Dudley Smith. "I am thrilled to bits," the bride's mother reveals.

2 April: Lauren Booth, sister of Cherie, has met her hero Michael Parkinson. "When he turned his crinkly smile on me I was reduced to a giggling wreck," she gushes.

5 April: Deyan Sudjic, a friend of Lord Rogers, is to be appointed as an architectural adviser to the government. As the diary notes, Sudjic is "the founder-editor of *Blueprint* magazine and one-time partner of the daughter of the second husband of Rogers's first wife".

6 April: Madeline Albright has been to the hairdresser. "The secretary of state yesterday sat under the dryer at Hair Design in Georgetown," the diary reveals.

10 April: Tennis player Martina Hingis, 18, is learning to drive. "I'm getting close to passing my test," she discloses. "It will be so nice when I no longer have to depend on someone else driving me around."

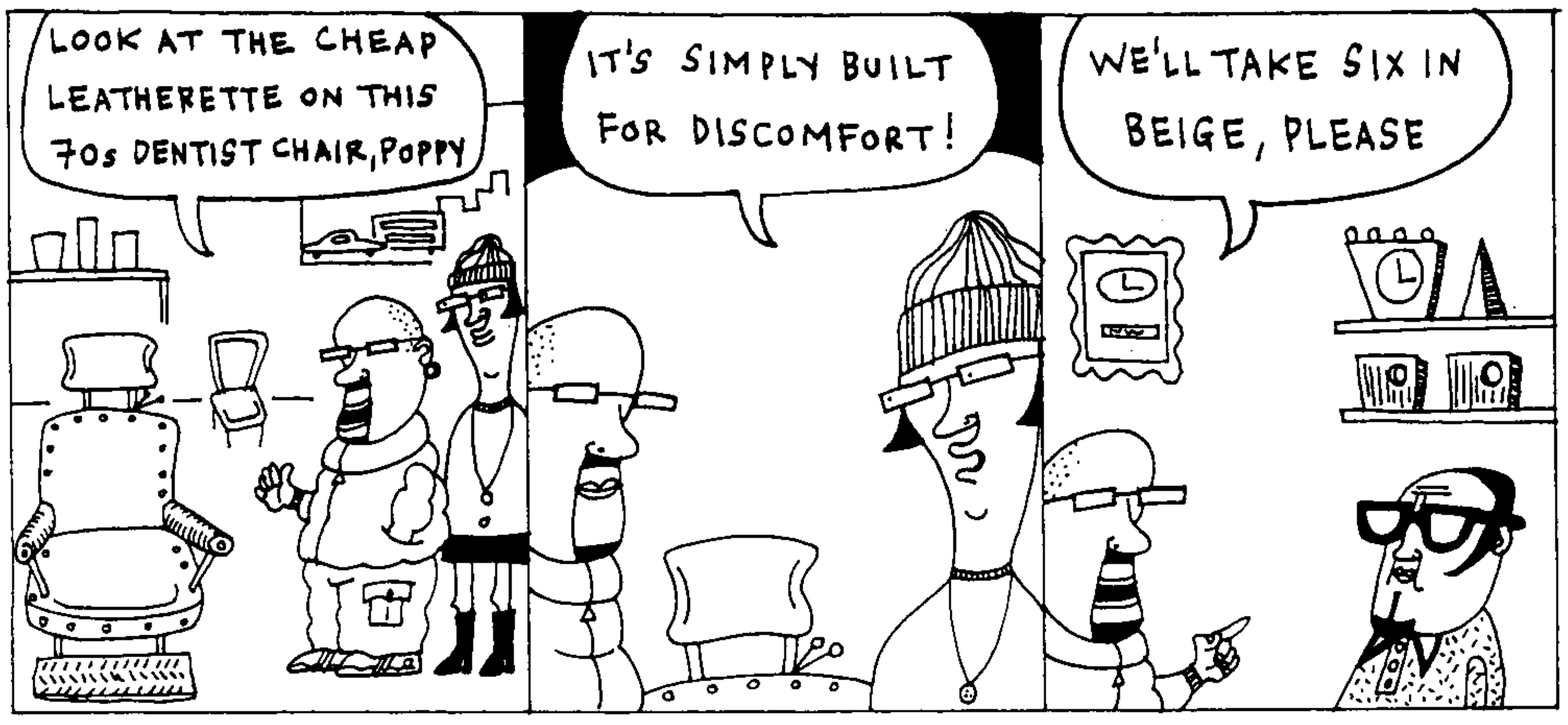
13 April: A plug for a course on "flirting for fun", aimed at single thirtysomethings. "Women can be very worried about giving out the wrong signals," says the organiser, Joy Penzer, "while men have to learn to cope with rejection." Fascinating!

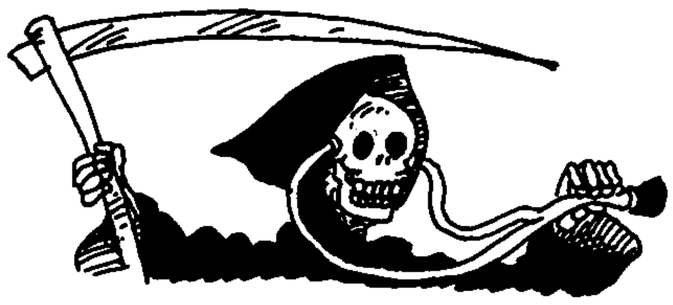
17 April: A campanology centre has been set up in Essex, the Diary reveals, "to tackle the national shortage of bell-ringers for the millennium".

19 April: Sad news: Beryl Bainbridge's grandson, Charlie, has been turned down by Oxford. "He was hoping to have read English and history," the diary informs us, "but will now be studying at Warwick University instead."

20 April: "Congratulations to James Burnell-Nugent, Captain of HMS Invincible. I gather he is to be promoted to Rear-Admiral." A genuine scoop at last! Hold the front page...

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON KNIFE & PACKER


LOOK AT THE CHEAP LEATHERETTE ON THIS 70s DENTIST CHAIR, POPPY
IT'S SIMPLY BUILT FOR DISCOMFORT!
WE'LL TAKE SIX IN BEIGE, PLEASE



DOING THE ROUNDS

The scandal that wasn't

"WHAT is so dangerous for doctors is the way publicity can be used as a weapon of punishment or intimidation. After Bristol, there's a hungry press waiting for the next medical negligence story, and any trust up and down the country can pull this threat of publicity out of the hat to use against consultants who don't see eye to eye with them."

So said Graham Barker, a consultant gynaecologist and senior clinical medical officer at St George's Hospital, London, after he "voluntarily withdrew" from clinical activity last year pending investigation of his practice of colposcopy, a microscopic examination of the cervix used for the treatment of women with abnormal cervical smears.

Barker has always maintained his innocence and was certain from the start that the trust was mounting a witch-hunt against him. The "scare" started in April 1998 when his gynaecological colleague, Desmond Barton, questioned Barker's competence and selected case notes from 19 of the 5,894 colposcopy patients he had treated in the previous 10 years. Under the guidance of medical director Dr Gillian Farnsworth, he sent them for analysis to Prof David Luesley and Patrick Walker, president and secretary of the British Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology.

Luesley and Walker judged that management of eight cases was unacceptable, five of which involved patients with abnormal vaginal cells left after hysterectomies not even carried out by Barker. Indeed, whenever he saw such patients in colposcopy clinics, he referred them to the combined gynaecology oncology clinic for treatment. Barton took over this clinic from Prof Stuart Stanton, another of Barker's apparent adversaries. Luesley and Walker neither acknowledged this, nor gave Barker credit for sending patients for further treatment at every opportunity. Instead they suggested to St George's that 1,035 of Barker's patients with abnormal cervical smears should be recalled.

The scientific basis for their suggestion has never been clear, but St George's chief executive Andrew Dillon rashly decided to announce the recall to the world without getting a second expert opinion, and Barker was roundly pilloried in the press as another dodgy doctor.

Barker had always closely audited both his private and NHS work but his accusers decided to focus on his colposcopic technique, rather than its results, and they have come badly unstuck. Six hundred and one of the 1,035 women agreed to be recalled, reexamined and rebiopsied. This work was done by Desmond Barton, who made the original allegations, without any independent oversight or verification from the royal colleges.

Barker has been completely exonerated. The recall found no cancers and confirmed an extremely low level of precancerous changes. However, it is estimated that the cost would have been at least £200,000 and must certainly have caused Barker's patients much anxiety. Independent experts have expressed amazement that St George's didn't get another opinion before proceeding. Indeed, when the Medical Defence Union asked one expert to review the initial cases sent to BSCCP, the expert in question agreed with Barker's management of *all* of them.

No one at St George's is shouting Barker's innocence from the rooftops. He still hasn't been reinstated and may now consider legal action to restore his reputation and get compensation for loss of earnings. His accusers have fared rather better.

Luesley is still president of the BSCCP despite the shambles and Walker has picked up a B merit award. So too has Dr Gillian Farnsworth, although she is no longer medical director of St George's. Professor Stanton has an A plus merit award. But the real winner is chief executive Andrew Dillon. He leaves St George's on 12 July for the National Institute for Clinical Excellence, which will provide expert guidelines for treatment throughout the NHS. Just the man for the job.

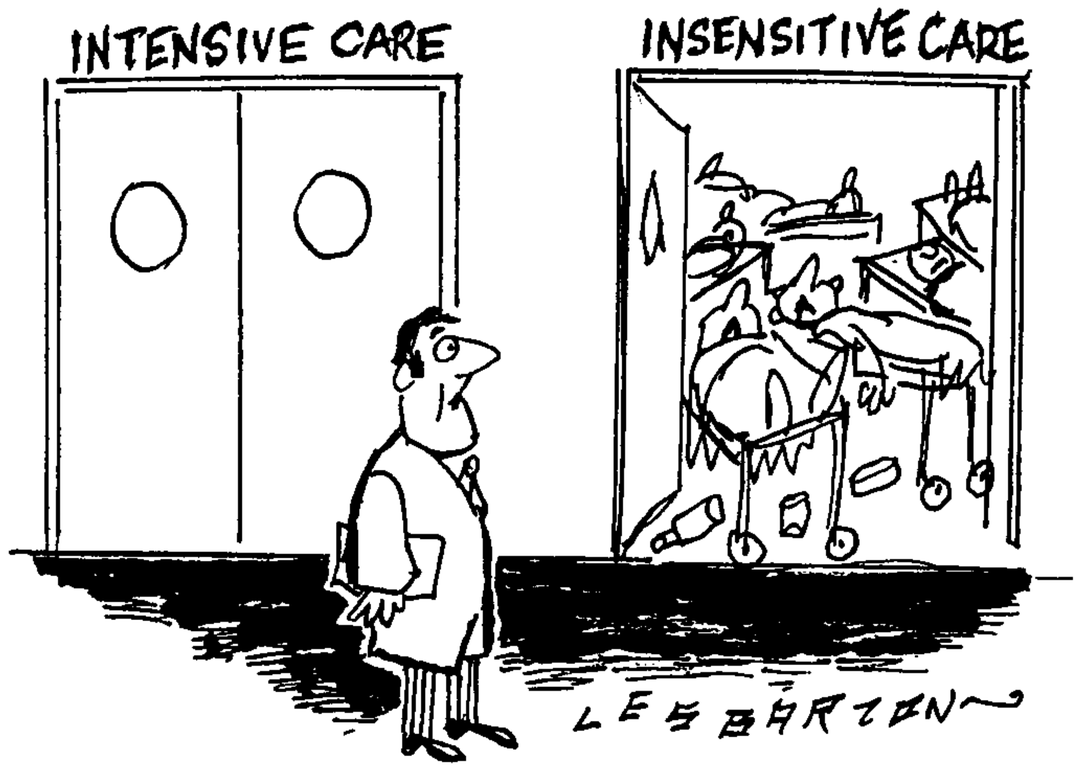
● MANAGEMENT of Royal Brompton Hospital is not only incompetent (losing £6.8m in a botched development deal [*Eye* 973]) but secretive.

Sir Philip Otton, chair of Brompton Hospital at the time of the mess up in 1996, recently interviewed members of the public for voluntary jobs on the trust. One candidate was Chris Sewell, a disabled man and chair of the Campaign for a Democratic Health Service for 10 years.

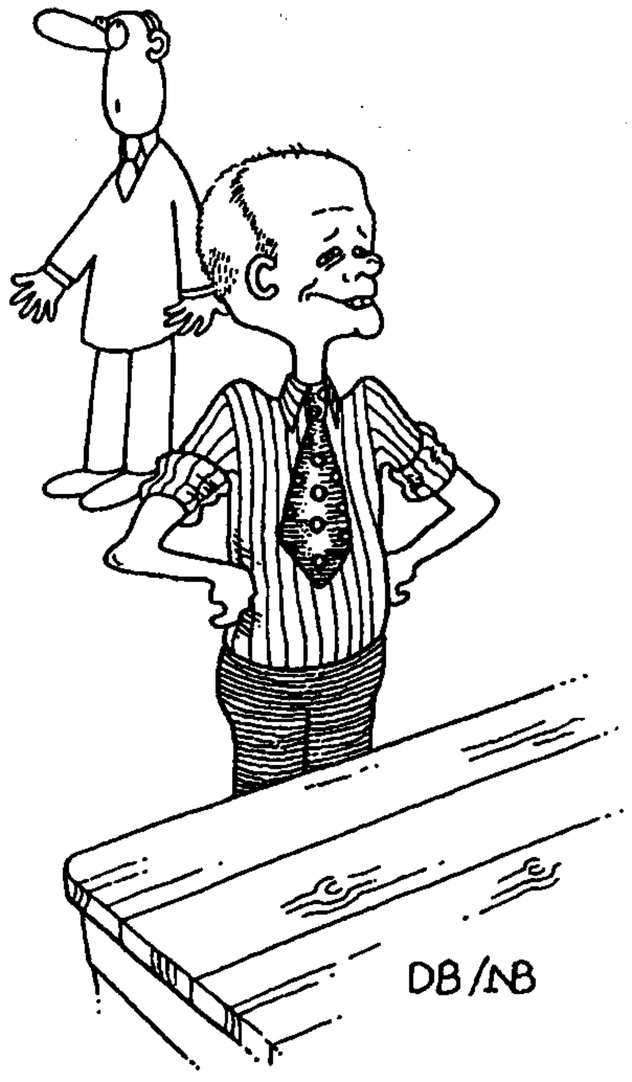
Sewell is more qualified than most to advise on healthcare, it would seem. But not to Sir Philip, who could not understand why Sewell wanted the health service to be more accountable and dismissed his proposals in what Sewell calls a "trial".

● IN 1997 the *Eye*'s favourite computer firm EDS won a £1m, 10-year contract with Southmead hospital in Bristol to "improve direct patient care and reduce waste, inefficiency and bureaucracy". The following year Southmead chief executive Philip Chubb left the hospital to become a director of EDS. He has now been joined by Iain Marsland, who as the hospital's information technology director was involved with the contract's approval and managing it once it was in place.

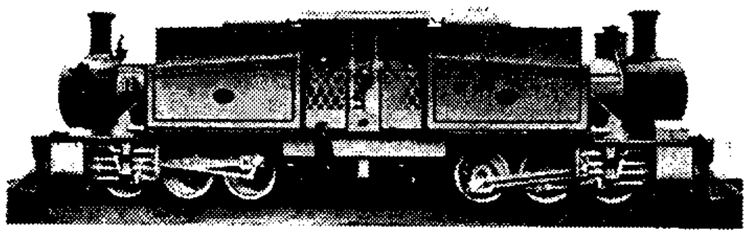
M.D.



NEW OLD SAYINGS



If you can't stand the heat, get out the kitchen table



SIGNAL FAILURES

Focus on GNER

GNER chief executive Christopher Garnett is trying hard to outdo Richard Branson as the privatised railway's worst loser.

Both Garnett and Branson like blaming British Rail for the shortcomings of their own franchises even though their companies were given full access to BR records when preparing their franchise bids and must have known precisely what they would be taking over.

When the latest statistics showed that delays on GNER still exceeded the 10 percent "standard" in the passenger's charter, Garnett vented his frustration on the class 91 locomotives bought by BR for its newly modernised King's Cross to Edinburgh east coast route, now run by GNER. "When BR ordered the 91 fleet, it was a case of as long as it is safe we go for the cheapest," he moaned.

Given this GNER clearly needed to order extra rolling stock if it was to run more services. It promised to do this whether or not its franchise was extended beyond the initial seven-year term (*Eye* 968) but subsequently declined to spend any serious money unless it was granted a longer franchise.

Yet that did not stop GNER laying on more services — using the fleet inherited from BR and putting the locos and their supposedly cheap components under greater strain. GNER is so determined to maximise profits from its equipment that locos now run 17 percent further each year (40,000 extra miles) than under BR.

GNER has replaced BR's paint scheme (large areas of white) with a sun-absorbing dark blue. This increases the locos' temperature on hot days, which cannot help sub-standard components. One driver told the *Eye* that fire detectors on some locos had tripped, shutting the engines down when internal temperatures hit 100°F.

Garnett's criticism of BR for buying cheap displays disloyalty to his own. BR's funding was ruthlessly constrained in the 1980s by a Tory Government in which his sister, Virginia Bottomley, was a leading light. It was the department of transport that kept BR on such a short leash — the under secretary for transport between 1986 and 1989 (when the class 91 locos were ordered and built) being Peter Bottomley, Garnett's brother-in-law. Will the Bottomleys invite Christopher for dinner ever again?

PS: The £350m modernisation of the east coast line, including new trains, was completed within budget (and on time) but Garnett gives BR no credit for this. This contrasts with the experience of Eurotunnel, which at around the same time failed to contain the cost of building the Channel tunnel. One of Eurotunnel's then directors was Christopher Garnett.

'Dr B. Ching'

Drivers are thoroughly trained after employment. Train drivers are subjected to random drugs and alcohol abuse during working hours. *Hull Daily Mail*

NOOKS and CORNERS

IN my recent article on the ruination of Stinsford House (*Eye* 973), tolerated if not actively abetted by West Dorset district council, I mentioned the sad case of Downe Hall at Bridport in the same benighted county.

Now I learn more, and worse, which suggests that there is little point in West Dorset bothering to employ a conservation officer or convening a planning and development committee. This case may now be past history, but it is still worth an airing.

Downe Hall (no relation to Charles Darwin's immensely boring pile in Kent) sounds, or rather sounded, rather nice. Built in 1789, the *Buildings of England* volume tells us that the villa "lies close above the town, secreted in a miniature park". A century after it was built, it was altered by that interesting and eccentric architect, E.S. Prior.

A few years back a concerned resident of Bridport alerted the Georgian Group to the fact that there was an application in for planning permission and listed building consent to convert Downe Hall into three flats and two houses and, as an "enabling development", to build eight houses in the grounds. Why, you may ask, did not the local authority inform this statutorily recognised amenity society as the law requires?

Well, David Oliver, the former "district architect" with West Dorset council who is now on Brian's payroll as "project consultant architect" to the Duchy of Cornwall's development at Poundbury, will proudly tell anyone who cares to listen that, in his time, it was policy never to consult the statutory amenity societies about listed building cases as all historic building legislation is a waste of time. Ownership and development was, and is, all.

The Georgian Group naturally objected to this application and, equally naturally, the council's planning 'n' development committee ignored this objection, encouraged by the feebleness of English Heritage. Eventually the Garden History Society persuaded English Heritage to add the site of Downe Hall to the register of parks and gardens of special historic interest, but this was merely an academic exercise as, two years ago, the council confirmed the original consent.

The council's director of development had prepared a report — not sent to the Georgian Group in time — arguing that subdivision and development of the grounds was the only possible solution to the problem of repairing its neglected roof. But Downe Hall was never offered for sale, so the (most dubious) argument that there was no market for such a house remained unproven.

Local objectors are still pressing for judicial review while the Georgian Group has written to both the secretary of state and the chairman of English Heritage to complain about West Dorset's disgraceful handling of this case, arguing that "no case has been made for the application and the proposals it contains are unnecessary... The group considers this one of the worst planning decisions we have witnessed in the last five years. When the permission has been implemented Downe Hall will no longer be of special interest as a rare example of a Georgian villa surviving in its original grounds. It will have become a sad illustration of the vulnerability of such havens when local planning authorities are unwilling to protect them." Quite so — and now the horrid new houses are built. West Dorset district council — ostensible custodian of 5 percent of grade I and II listed buildings in England — ought to be abolished and the county ruled directly by Sir Jocelyn Stevens.

DOESN'T it make you swell with patriotic pride? Our own Sir Norman Foster has just been awarded the American Pritzker Prize, another of the gongs awarded to each other by world-famous architects and their cronies. And, last week, Foster handed over the keys of the revamped Reichstag so the Bundestag can at last move from Bonn to Berlin. Foster has created a new debating chamber inside the battered shell of Kaiser Bill's baroque building, so British architects rule the world, OK?

With the usual chorus of adulation granted to our knighted and ennobled British superstars, the only dissenting noise is coming, as it happens, from Germany. Stern complains that "Foster's airport aesthetic with neon lights and metallic grey dominates" the inside of the building, having destroyed the 1960s interiors by Paul Baumgarten. Die Welt writes of "banality" and the "chilly, almost anti-septic" rooms. Well, what did they expect?

Foster has covered Britain with exciting high tech buildings whose interiors are award-winning exemplars of banality and clinical chilliness. You cannot expect a man who postures as only a structural engineer to be interested in warmth, enclosure, resonance, symbolism, richness and all the qualities which might make public spaces enjoyable and memorable. As for the notion that glass walls somehow symbolise transparency and thus democracy, well, how naive can you get?

The joke is that the best bit of the rebuilt Reichstag — the glass dome with its spiral ramp and inverted cone of mirrors — was a feature forced on Foster. His original proposal was to cover the rump of Paul Wallot's building with a sort of big flat glass umbrella, supported on metal columns placed round the edge. When this ridiculous notion was abandoned, Foster wanted to leave the exterior as it was, but the Bundestag insisted a new dome should rise to replace the one burnt in 1933. So someone in Foster's office came up with the (good) idea of the transparent glass dome.

'Piloti'

DOWN ON THE FARM

EUROPEAN union farm ministers appear to have done something less than clever. During talks on reform of the common agricultural policy (CAP), they agreed to give Finland and Sweden an extra £12 per tonne in arable aid.

The reason — and here is the surprising bit — is that it is colder up there. The extra cash is to pay for grain drying.

Experts in geography have already noticed a slight problem with this: quite a *lot* of bits of Europe are different from quite a lot of other bits.

Already Welsh farmers are saying it is rather wet in Wales, not to mention hilly, so they need extra help too. And research has recently shown that the Mediterranean countries can be quite hot and dry, so they may well need cash to pay for irrigation. And ... the mountains of Greece there is hardly any soil at all, which is obviously going to be expensive to remedy.

Meanwhile in the Scottish highlands sheep farmers looking to diversify claim they are being discriminated against because they are not eligible for any olive-growing subsidy at all. In fact, they should get extra because of the difficulties caused by lack of sunshine.

Happily, at least one thing is the same across Europe: all areas receive equal amounts of moonshine.

● IN the time of innocence before BSE, the public showed little concern about eating pigmeat from sick pigs containing antibiotic residues and potentially infected with antibiotic-resistant germs.

But in July the first ban on some of the antibiotics routinely fed to pigs and poultry comes into effect, producing more squealing from the intensive pig lobby and the drug manufacturers than a shed full of porkers at swill time.

The magazine *Farmers Weekly* owns one such intensive unit rearing 7,500 pigs a year and has run two trials to see what effect the ban will have. In the first the "growth enhancer" oloquindox was removed from trial batches of weaners. They grew just as fast as before and actually consumed less feed. "It appears we're getting no benefit from it," said the manager.

At the same time older pigs were taken off the antibiotic tylosin. This did make a tiny difference, amounting to a loss of 20.5p per pig. And the saving in tylosin? Er, 21p.

The "animal health" industry has always claimed pig production would be highly expensive without antibiotics. It seems hardly possible that they have been leading everyone, including the experts at *Farmers Weakly*, by the snout all these years. Or have they?

'Gumboot'

Down on the Fish Farm

THE spectre of radioactive contamination is poking its hot finger into the privileged pie of posh people's salmon angling in Scotland.

A recent aerial survey has identified chunks of moorland bordering the River Forss in Caithness, in the north, which contain radioactive ceasium at 10 times the average background level.

A few miles to the west lies the River Naver, where a week's fishing can be bought for upwards of £2,000. This is the playground of angling luminaries such as the Prince of Wales, Max, Prince of Hastings, and Jeremy, Prince of *Newsnight*.

Neither is the little Forss a stranger to the great and good of salmon fishing. The river was bought and time-shared in the 1980s by Jim Slater, financier and piscator, and has been fished by many notables including multi-millionaire Adrian Swire, Lord Bolton and, in previous years, the Queen Mum.

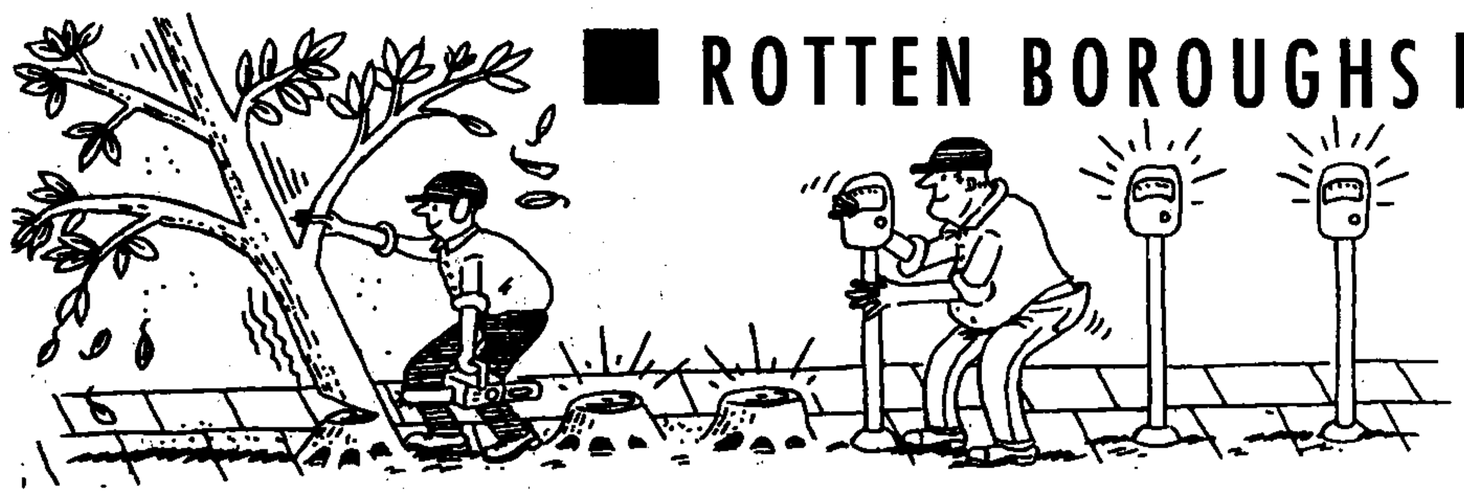
The presence of the nuclear footprint is thought to be the result of "nuclear bomb testing and the fallout from the Chernobyl accident in 1986". Additional contamination was discovered to the west of the mouth of the River Forss, between Crosskirk Bay and Dounreay, and on adjacent hinterland to the south and east of the river.

Those who did the survey insist the contamination, which could affect marine life including salmon, has nothing whatever to do with the UKAEA power station at Dounreay. The plant lies between the Forss and Naver rivers. The survey was undertaken by Sander GSL, Exploranium Ltd of Canada and... UKAEA Technology itself.

The UKAEA is not renowned for either truth or plain-speaking when it comes to telling the public exactly what goes on behind its security fences. For years highly radioactive particles have been found on the Dounreay foreshore and the seabed near the plant. Now, the Scottish office has banned "the taking, landing and use of all species of fish and shellfish in an area of 2 kilometre radius around the end of the (Dounreay) outfall pipe".

A UKAEA spokesman said that "levels of radioactive contamination did not pose a threat to human health" — unless of course you happen inadvertently to eat a particle while picnicking on the beach or fishing. So that's all right, then.

'Old Trout'



ROTTEN BOROUGHS

LOFIT CONVERSION

AS readers of Eye 963 will recall, the London organised fraud investigation team (Lofit) was closed after a damning report by the benefit fraud inspectorate found that it was "not equal to the task of tackling organised cross-borough housing benefit fraud".

The Association for London Government (ALG) brought in Allen Gales, a local government finance consultant, to oversee the winding down and to dispose of Lofit's £300,000 or so of assets. For his efforts Gales received £2,500 a week for six months till the end of March.

Lofit's assets included an impressive array of sleuthing gear: 24 computers, three laptops, printers, portable CD drives, hi-tech cameras, camcorders, faxmodems, tripods, binoculars, mobile phones, shredders, night vision scopes, a motorbike, etc, etc; all paid for with public money. To get the best prices, Gales requested that bids by local authorities and others should be submitted to his office in Victoria Street, kindly provided by Westminster council.

Opening the envelopes containing the bids were Gales and a Westminster council official. Doing very nicely out of the disposal are independent auditor ACIT, which won the bid for £10,000 of IT equipment for a sum not unadjacent to £100. Coincidentally ACIT is Westminster council's auditor.

● **KENT county council, in a commendable display of multiculturalism, held a reception at County Hall, Maidstone, last week to celebrate the 300th anniversary of Sikhism. The evening, attended by the Indian high commissioner, included prayers. According to Sikh religious custom, one must keep one's head covered during prayers. Alas no one had bothered to inquire into Sikh religious customs. Thus councillors, to avoid offence, if not embarrassment, all wore paper napkins on their heads during the ceremony.**

BIG BEN

JACK STRAW got it completely wrong about scousers. They are not always "up to something". It's just that Liverpool is an intimate, friendly place where everyone knows everyone else...

Take the city Labour group's new leader, Gideon Ben-Tovim (Eye 974). Since the riots of the 1980s, Ben-Tokenism has had the support of many black activists in his Granby ward. One of the "yoof" leaders in the area was Wally Brown, who went on to do a sociology degree. His tutor was Gideon Ben-Tovim.

In the early 1990s Ben-Tovim opposed the merger of Liverpool's four further education colleges into one. The battle lost, however, he overcame his objections and became chair of the governing body of the merged Liverpool community college in 1992. The governors advertised for a principal of the college, the second biggest in the UK, and attracted a strong field of candidates. Wally Brown was appointed as principal, despite having no FE management experience.

Gideon Ben Tokenism still chairs the college governors. The deputy principal is his wife, Margaret. Her job, however, was not advertised. That's Liverpool for you — one big, happy family!

NOBLE ADVICE

LONDON mayoral wannabe Lord Harris of Haringey, the ex-Toby Harris, has a strange way of drumming up former Labour colleagues' support — criticising the regime he inherited as leader of Haringey council from Bernie Grant 12 years ago.

In his letter to fellow councillors announcing his resignation as leader (too many late sittings at Westminster, don't y'know), the newly ennobled Harris boasts of having rescued a council in economic "meltdown". Odd. Former colleagues remember his demands, as chair of social services, as having been some of the biggest claims on the council's budget.

Haringey folk are unlikely to loyally vote for Lord Tobes in the event of his securing the Labour nomination for mayor. As a group of residents stood in the rain to lobby councillors last December, one asked the great man if anything could be done to save their local museum. "Fuck off," advised the noble lord.

● **RHONDDA Cynon Taff taxpayers felt the contribution made by councillor Mrs Aurfron Roberts to a concert in aid of a local community centre last week most appropriate. Mrs Roberts, a member of the ruling Labour group which has seen the council's reserves run down from £26m to just £500,000 in three years, sang as her party piece "There's A Hole In My Bucket".**

WIGHT CARRY-ON

RESIDENTS of the Isle of Wight, still digesting the arrival of council tax bills with a well-above-average increase of 8.9 percent, plus the usual demand that they should pay up promptly or else, are trying to figure out why one of their number who owes thousands to the council in court costs has been given 20 years to pay.

Senior British Library civil servant Michael O'Keefe "hobby farms" 200 acres near Chale as a break from commuting to London. He has spent 11 years battling to have a well-used footpath across his land extinguished, much to the annoyance of locals. The case went all the way to the high court, which ruled against O'Keefe in October 1997, landing him with a bill for the council's costs which has grown with interest to £44,000.

Council officials dithered for a year before daring to ask the stubborn O'Keefe to pay up. He stumped up £40,000, but was allowed to negotiate a deal whereby the remaining £4,000 will be paid at £20 a month, starting in March 2002. At this rate, the last instalment will be due in 2019 — more than three decades after the wrangle began.

This is not the first time IoW council's legal services manager Peter Pilgrem has let O'Keefe off the hook. When a court awarded £7,500 to the council after O'Keefe lost an action over obstruction of the highway, Pilgrem generously reduced the figure to £1,000, again for reasons said to be far too complex for simple island folk to understand.

● **IN Rotten Boroughs in Eye 974 we described Bill Lovell as "director of finance at Wealden district council and consultant for Academy Information Systems". Mr Lovell, who is Wealden's assistant treasurer, is not and never has been employed as a consultant by Academy. Sorry.**

Letters

Private Eye

Guns Spiked

Sir,

Robert Blake (974) issues the standard cancellation letter on the grounds that the cover of issue 973 upset him. He states that: "War at the sharp end has never been funny. Quite a few people in this country know this."

Spike Milligan didn't, obviously.

STEVE NEVILLE,

Via e-mail.

Lookalike

Toad

Fayed

Sir,

Do any of your readers share with me the uncanny realisation that there is a more than passing resemblance between the Crowned Toad pictured and the Very Wonderful Proprietor of Harrods?

Yours sincerely, speculatively and subversively,
MICHAEL TREMBERTH,

Surbiton, Surrey.

Hugh said it

Sir,

So my 1997 E. coli report was foolish (Even Newer Muckspreader, Eye, 16 April). Shurely shome mistake. Human cases fell by 49 percent in Scotland last year.

HUGH PENNINGTON,

Dept of Medical Microbiology, University of Aberdeen.

Didn't they do well?

Sir,

Never let the facts get in the way of good propaganda as "Dr" Jamie Shea O'Goebbels might say. From being under the heel of Johnny Turk in 1804, the year of the first Serbian uprising, to being the dominant people in the largest state in the Balkans in 1918 was not bad going for Johnny Serb.
As to 1941...

1) The Yugoslav army melted away in good part because of the defection of the Croats who welcomed in the Nazi jackboot with flowers and kisses. The first resistance movement in Yugoslavia, as any fule no, was led by Draza Mihailovic — Tito, following the Comintern line, collaborated with the Nazis until Hitler launched his invasion of the Soviet Union.

2) Contrary to what your correspondent Mr Blagovic asserts, the Partisan movement was almost wholly composed of Serbs (until late 1944 when the outcome of the war was clear), especially the brigades in Croatia and Bosnia you mentioned — the Croats and Muslims were too busy slaughtering Serbs, Jews, Gypsies and other undesirables in a manner which shocked even their Nazi overlords.

3) Yes, the Chetniks collaborated with the Germans — so did everybody else including Tito who agreed to fight with the Nazis against any attempted Allied landing on Yugoslavia's Adriatic coast.

1995 saw the fulfilment of the Croatian dream of 1941 — Croatia cleansed, with US and German military support, of its Serbian Untermenschen. That the same didn't happen in Bosnia was, I suspect, that the expulsion of a million and a half Serbs by the NATO-led Croat and Muslim armies would have been a little too much a little too soon — even for you.

Yours etc,
MARKO MARCETIC,

Belgrade.

Zero heroes

Sir,

It is all a matter of from which perspective you want to look, for instance look at the Heroic Brits:

1815: Waterloo-Brits only saved from certain defeat by the Germans.

1854-56: Combining with the French, the Brits still could not beat the rambling empire of the Tzars in Crimea.

1914-18: Even with the help of the Australians and New Zealanders, the Brits get defeated by the Turks (who had just been defeated by the Serbs!) at Gallipoli. Then the Brits get saved by the US of A from defeat by the Germans.

1939-45: Brits collaborate with Germany, and would have continued but for the arrival of Churchill. 1941, Serbs oppose Hitler's invasion of the Balkans and the Brits drop the Serbs in the shit by supporting communist Tito (of unknown origin but certainly not from the Balkans). Then the Brits get saved again by the US of A against certain defeat by the Germans.

1973-present: Over a 25-year period the mighty Brits totally unable to defeat just several hundred Irish Republicans — results still uncertain.

1982: Only able to beat the Argies with the extensive help of, you've guessed it, the US of A.

As I said, it's all a matter of which perspective you want to use.

Yours faithfully,
PAUL PETROVITCH (born in Serbia, but Brit since the 1950s),

Via e-mail.

Stoned

Sir,

As a council press officer I spend half my time trying to stop tabloids writing the rubbish for which they are regularly lampooned in the Eye.

Having now dealt with one of your staff, imagine my surprise to find you have the same contempt for the facts if they spoil a good story.

Phil Space himself could have written the Rotten Boroughs piece (Eye 974) hinting this council's leader and finance director had a hand in choosing Capita as a private sector partner because of any previous links they had with the company.

I told your reporter IN WRITING:

1) For ethical reasons they deliberately played no part whatever in "selecting" the company;

2) The interview panel that did was made up of four councils run by three different political parties and overseen by the district auditor.

Whether he believed me, I neither know nor care. But they are points relevant to the story which you chose to ignore.

For the Eye to practise standards of journalism it slags off in Hackwatch is just hypocrisy. And for the Eye to be hypocritical AND on a mission to root out hypocrisy is, er...

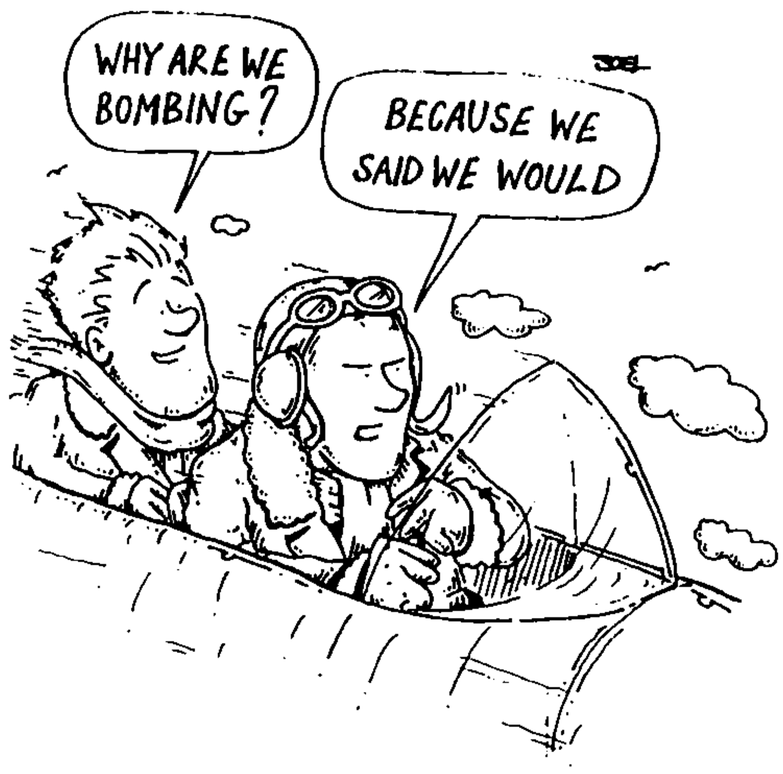
Yours, hacked off
ALAN STONE,

Brighton & Hove Council Press Office.

Bad and Worcs

Sir,

"In the past 30 years," writes M.D. (Eye 974), "caesarean sections in the UK have risen from 5 percent to 17 percent of births and in some areas the rate is much higher (28 percent in Bromsgrove)." The true rate for Bromsgrove is — zero percent. What's more, it has been consistently zero for 12 years past since we moved our hospital from Bromsgrove to the new town of Redditch, where the section rate sadly mirrors the national average.



Biggles and the Ill-Defined Military Aims and Objectives

Yours sincerely,
PETER V. SCOTT,

Consultant obstetric anaesthetist, Alexandra Hospital, Redditch, Worcs.

Saturday fright

Sir,

As Gino Drew advocates, I have stopped buying the Guardian — on a Saturday — because Julie Burchill writes for it. How many more of us are there?

Yours,
ED HORTON,

Thame, Oxon.

Doctor at sea

Sir,

M.D. commenting on my letter about the 350 redundant obstetrician/gynaecologists (Eye 974), says that women are 15 times more likely to have a hysterectomy if they have "got no secondary education". May I point out to M.D., who is clearly behind the times (90 years, in fact), that secondary education for girls has been available in this country since 1902, and has been a statutory requirement since 1918. Perhaps this slip is not just the result of overt male doctor prejudice against women, but is M.D.'s way of saying that every woman is at risk!

The myth that gynaecologists' wives are a prime target was also debunked by research carried out in Switzerland and reported in the British Medical Journal (Letters, volume 314 10/5/97 Domenighetti, Cantonal Health Office, Bellinzona, Switzerland). Lawyers' and doctors' wives were shown to be the least preyed upon, not the most!

Yours sincerely,
SANDRA SIMKIN,

Director and National Campaign Co-ordinator, Campaign Against Hysterectomy.

Mac the knife

Sir,

Attacks on me ("Tales From The Arabian Nights", Eye 974) are a singular irrelevance. Although they are false and malicious, I have become inured to being caught up in your long standing and vitriolic campaign against Mr Al Fayed.

However, to attack Una Riley for her article in Professional Security magazine, merely in order to serve your wider purposes against Mr Al Fayed, is outrageous and plumbs depths which are extraordinarily low, even by Eye standards. I had not met Ms Riley until she contacted me and asked if she could do an interview as part of a series profiling Heads of Security of major retailers. I agreed. She saw me and many others involved in the security operation at Harrods. I had no idea what she would write, and she was neither offered nor received any inducement to write a favourable piece. She has most certainly not sought one.

Your publication is of course used to working with journalists who are quite prepared to sacrifice professional integrity. According to your article I stand accused of being "morally bankrupt". For you to suggest that it is Ms Riley who has sacrificed her professional integrity demonstrates clearly which of us is truly morally bankrupt.

Yours faithfully,
JOHN MACNAMARA,

Director of Security, Harrods.

Photo opportunity

Sir,

Your regularly used photograph of the ageing hack posing with a preposterously young Asian babe is not as unusual as you seem to think.

Private Eye has sniggered for far too long at the unfortunate tank-topped man seen with the stunningly attractive Asian lady. As this photo shows, other senior media figures have been snapped with much younger women at their side looking, it must be said, just as ridiculous.

Yours,
W. DENG (no relation),

Beijing.

Down with Piloti

Sir,

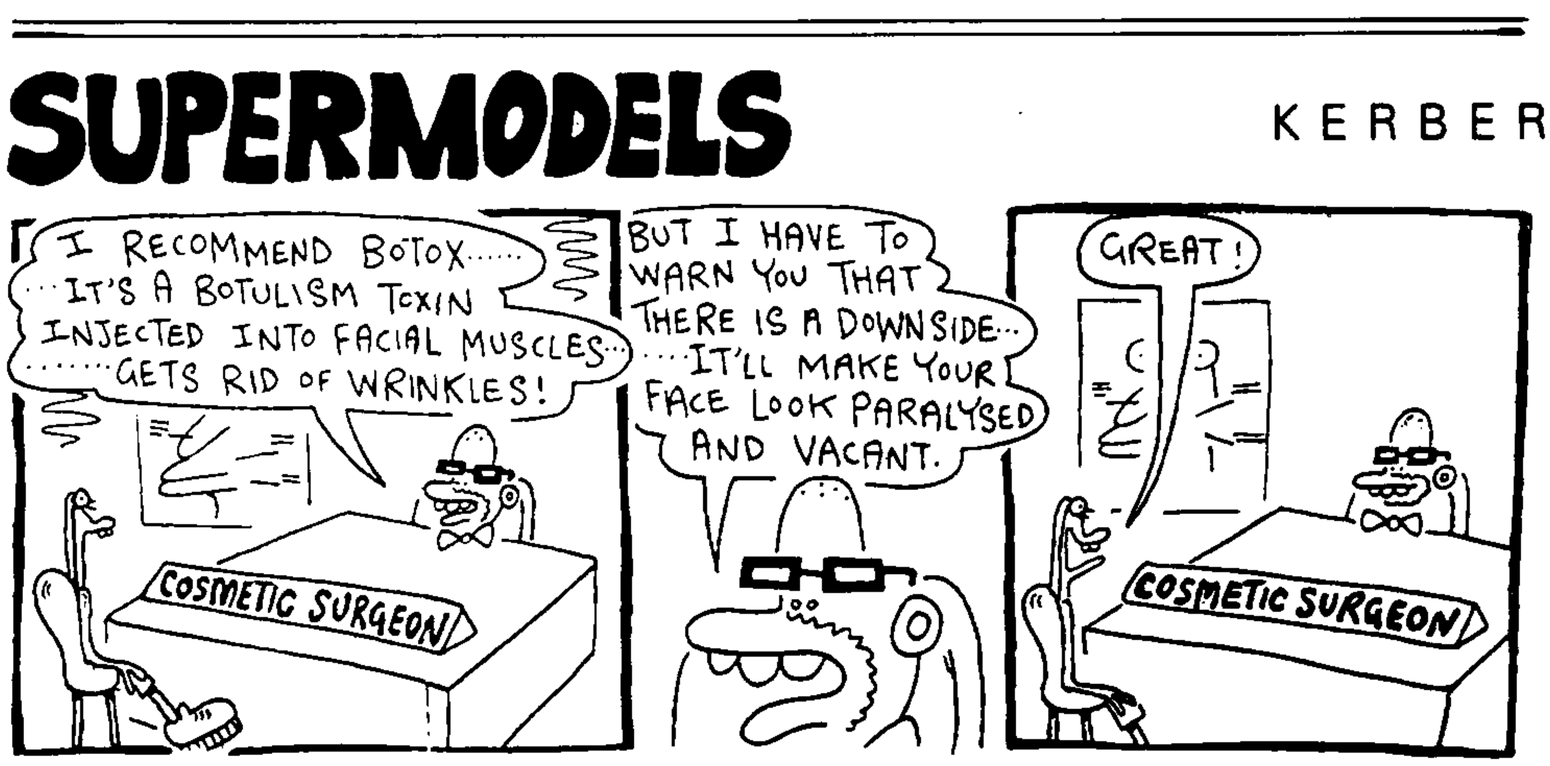
I happened to visit Down House the day before its possible world heritage listing was announced. I may be a Christian and a believer in Genesis — but I heartily approve. I find Piloti's rubbishing of the nomination (Eye 974) even wider of the mark than normal.

This is where Darwin wrote The Origin of Species. Whatever you feel about its subsequent abuse by militant atheists, this was one of the most influential scientific works ever written. I found the chance to see the actual room in which Darwin wrote it — not "Laura Ashleyed up" but tastefully, methodically and appropriately furnished — a moving experience.

Did Darwin contribute more to world culture than Faraday? Physics was my first scientific love but I'd still see a theory of the origin of life and humanity as more relevant to culture than the mathematics of electricity.

Yours,
COLIN DEL STROTHER,

Richmond, Surrey.


SUPERMODELS
KERBER
I RECOMMEND BOTOX.....
....IT'S A BOTULISM TOXIN INJECTED INTO FACIAL MUSCLES...
.....GETS RID OF WRINKLES!
COSMETIC SURGEON
BUT I HAVE TO WARN YOU THAT THERE IS A DOWNSIDE...
....IT'LL MAKE YOUR FACE LOOK PARALYSED AND VACANT.
GREAT!
COSMETIC SURGEON

I-SPY *Paris*

Submitted by Hannah Fairweather. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs. No transparencies.)*

Hard lines Hardwick

Sir,

HP Sauce (Eye 974) was spot on in the piece about my barring Liz Davies' chum from a Blair photo-call in Cape Town — in every respect bar the facts, which are:

1) The Blair trip was in October 1996, not this year.

2) Far from being "surprised" by my visit, our respective families saw each other all the time and I worked with her husband.

3) I didn't espy a graduation picture of Davies in a downstairs room — my friend mentioned her the first time we met. Anyway, they live in a cottage, so don't have an upstairs.

4) True, I did arrange a Blair photo-call and I didn't invite her, but this was a Labour International event and she was neither a party member nor interested in joining.

5) While I have the utmost respect for our great leader, my previous employer, John Prescott, and all my friends will be astonished to learn that I am suddenly a Blairite. Please allow me to correct this calumny.

Keep up the good work.

Yours faithfully,
STEVE HARDWICK,

London NW6.

Doesn't add up

Sir,

When Fiona Jones (ex Labour MP for Newark) was found guilty of election expense fraud her justification was that "lay people could not be expected to understand the complicated rules on expenses and fill in the forms". It was also suggested that many other MPs had similar difficulties understanding these difficult financial matters. Apparently, they are well qualified to debate and vote on fiscal and financial matters relating to the UK's expense budget or EU budgetary problems, but not, it seems, their own expense forms!

PAUL RHODES,

London SW19.

Fook off

Sir,

Your Diary article for Mark and Lard is the worst piece I have ever read in Private Eye. It completely misses the mark, it is not funny and I am at a complete loss to understand what it is intended to be. It neither captures (and parodies) the rhythm and timing of the couple's considerable comic talents, nor does it score any satirical points at their expense.

To add insult to injury the writer falls into the usual trap, common to public school educated journalists, of attempting some dreadful comic northern accent. No doubt an Oasis article comprising several "fookings" will follow. (Strange how the various peculiar accents of the Home Counties don't suffer these same painfully unfunny attempts at humorous spellings.)

ANDY PEACOCK,

Nottingham.

O·B·N

"Mohamed has taken a lot of flak in this country, which is so unfair. He is one of the sweetest, kindest men you could ever know. The problem is that people judge people before they even know them. To me he is like a big Santa Claus. He loves giving, he's very wise and creative, talented and kind-hearted. Very giving. He's taught me a lot and I love learning from him."

MICHAEL JACKSON
on Mohamed Fayed
The Mirror

£10 paid for entries put forward for the Order of the Brown Nose.

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"It's hands on hips and heads in hands for the Charlton players."
COMMENTATOR, Radio 5
(Garve Scott-Lodge)

"Sullivan stopped everything that came his way... it's Wimbledon 1, Manchester United 1."
BARRY DAVIES, BBC1
(Gordon Daley)

"Germany are a very difficult team to play... they had eleven internationals out there today."
STEVE LOMAS, Ireland
(Aidan Ingoldsby)

"Macclesfield have come out in the second half with all guns steaming..."
BRIAN SEYMOUR-SMITH, Sky Sports 1
(Paul Golder)

HOM SAP

AUSTIN

Postcard from **Italy**
from Our Own Correspondent

ROMANO PRODI's designation as new European union president has been portrayed as good for Britain, having been inspired by your own dear Mr Tony. But there has been much nonsense written in the Blairite press about your leader's newfound "friend".

The first bit of nonsense is that Prodi favours free markets. Anyone remotely acquainted with Italian politics knows that Italian centre-left economics *alla Prodi* means Euro-federasty and soft-left Keynesianism.

In the 80s, as an Italian government apparatchik, Prodi was put in charge of IRI, an Italian state holding company. Like the EU, IRI was a massive vehicle of political patronage entirely dependent on huge government grants. Living off and dispensing handouts is what Prodi is good at. He loathes free markets.

The second inexactitude is that Prodi will be a "new broom" who cleans up the EU. Early in his career he taught freemasonry (sorry, "economics") at the famously corrupt University of Bologna. For most of his political life he was a fully fledged puppet of the Christian Democrat party. The Christian Democrats were part of every Italian government since the war, before dissolving in their own effluent in the 1990s. Prodi skilfully managed to keep his hands *out* of the trough and was promoted to prime minister — where his lack of support for Italian judges in their war on government corruption was conspicuous. Does Blair seriously believe a man with Prodi's record is the right person to clean the Brussels cesspit?

The third whopper is that Prodi is a man of "great personal integrity". Er... First, he has already appointed a colleague involved in numerous Italian corruption scandals to his personal staff. Then, even though the EU president is supposed to be politically neutral, Prodi has declared that his new EU job and his new Democratic political party are "two sides of the same coin". Though the EU blocked him standing as a candidate in EU elections, he continues to participate in political campaigning. His response to Kosovo — a lily-livered plea for Vatican and UN intervention rather than fullscale European support for Nato — stinks of his own Italian political interests.

From here, your Mr Blair's endorsement of Prodi looks very naive indeed. Especially if Mr Tony believes that his and Prodi's "personal friendship" will enable him to have any influence in Europe. Prodi will forget about the "friendship" as soon as he is safely ensconced in Brussels. His declared aim is to be a "new Delors" while at the same time promoting Italian interests and enlarging his Italian electoral base ready for a return to Italy in five years' time.

Prodi is not remotely interested in increasing democracy, legality or free markets in the EU, you see. But like Thatcher and Major before him, Blair simply does not understand the nature of EU politics... or EU politicians.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH

"Looking back, I suppose I was rather gullible," Lin Chu admitted while giving evidence to the Eastern Magistracy in Hong Kong. "My husband was working in Shenzhen, and we hadn't spoken for several weeks. So when the phone rang and a man said he was my husband, I believed him. He told me he was depressed and wanted to masturbate, and needed various things of mine to help him. He told me to take a brassiere, underpants, lipstick, mascara, a cup of my own urine and my fly swat, and deliver them all to an address in Causeway Bay, from where they would passed on to him. I was worried about his health, and he sends money back regularly, so I agreed. But when I knocked on the door, the man who answered it told me that he wanted to see me fill the cup again, so he could be sure it was my urine. So I did it in front of him, but afterwards I became suspicious and decided to call the police, and that's when the truth emerged."

Passing sentence, Magistrate Garry Tallentire told Lee Chi-shing, 53, that his behaviour was disgusting and shameful. "You have told the court that you were bored, and only wanted to have a bit of fun. But you deliberately misled this woman, pretended to be her husband on the phone, and made her perform acts for your perverted pleasure. Not truly obscene acts, I grant you, but degrading all the same. I sentence you to a two-year probation, on condition that you receive psychiatric treatment." *(Hong Kong Standard, 13 March 1999. Spotter Simon Fraser)*

— o —

"On the face of it, there are strong indications of suicide in the death of Cyril Sylvester Johnson," stated Coroner Michael Howells at an inquest in Milford Haven. "His body was found in a bedroom in his brother's house in Hakin, and he had wedged the door shut from the inside with the headboard of his bed. Lying next to him on the floor was a nearly-empty bottle of rum, a hip flask, a wine glass, and a container of medication. And a note was found on his dressing table, on which were written the song lyrics 'I'm H-A-P-P-Y; I'm H-A-P-P-Y; I know I am, I'm sure I am, I'm H-A-P-P-Y.'

"However, his niece, Ms Sonia Bambrough, has assured us that Mr Johnson always sang that particular song, because he loved his life. I am also satisfied that there must be an innocent explanation for his having removed the headboard from the bed and wedged it against the door. Therefore, despite the pathologist's observation that the circumstances 'strongly suggest something else' and the very high levels of alcohol and medication in Mr Johnson's system, I shall record a verdict of death by natural causes." *(West Wales Mercury, 5/3/99. Spotter: Gareth Fortune)*

— o —

"You've got guys going around now in small cars with 15-inch speakers and 1,000-watt amplifiers blaring out music," Judge Paul Sacco told reporters at his Noise Aversion Therapy Center in Fort Lupton, Colorado. "I'm just trying to teach them that it's wrong to impose your musical style on someone else. I mean, I like the music of Elton John, but I'm not going to ram him down your throat".

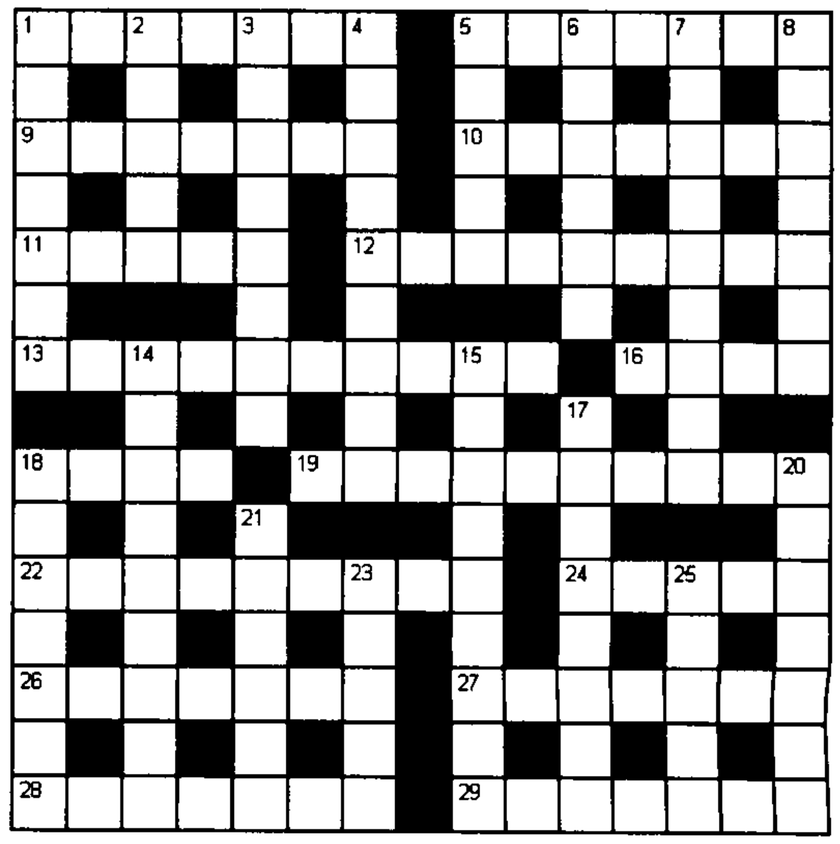
Since December, Judge Sacco has been ordering people convicted of violating the city's noise ordinance to attend his Aversion Center in City Hall, where they are forced each week to listen to music they hate. "The offenders are almost all young, so there is a heavy dose of lounge music, plus bagpipes, plenty of John Denver songs, and some Navajo flute music. A typical evening might begin with Wayne Newton singing 'Danke Schoen,' followed by Roy Rogers and Dale Evans duetting on 'Happy Trails to You' and Tony Orlando and Dawn with 'Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree,' and end with Roger Whittaker singing 'I'm Going to Leave

Old Durham Town.' Oh, and my own jazz compositions are particularly unpopular, so they always get plenty of those. And if they fall asleep, their eyes will be pried open."

Sacco's claims that his aversion therapy works were backed up by offenders. "I'm not going to jam no more," said seventeen-year-old David Mascarenas after attending two sessions. "I took my stereo out of my car already. I don't want to be hassled no more. If you don't pay attention they cite you for contempt. They're playing Dean Martin in there and it's not nice." (San Francisco Chronicle, 6/3/99. Spotter: Bill Evans)

EYE CROSSWORD 129

by Cyclops — *£100 prize*



ACROSS

1 Dance and drink fiasco (5-2)
5 Down-payment – Clinton's led to Monica's marked habit (7)
9 Once severely restricted the progress of the criminal member linked with club (3-4)
10 Say again sex takes a very long time, note (7)
11 Potter, Dennis, initially did sod all (5)
12 Fanny has to be probed for this libel on the game of cricket (5,4)
13/16/18ac. Just waiting for a couple of rounds to see in the New Year with a bang? (10,4,4)
16 (see 13)
18 (see 13)
19 Observers lacking as Dany's breasts wobbled (10)
22 Scary Spice, nothing on, to run off with English former PM (9)
24 Act like a queen / prince in the old days (5)
26 Non-artificial penis on Chip (7)
27 Powder blue retiring political leader (7)
28 Times to come, giving female true orgasm, between you and me (7)
29 Nationally-a load of balls, Tory let off (7)

DOWN

1 Marbles endlessly inserted in behind of EC member (7)
2 Allowed exhumation of de Gaulle, due to leave (5)
3 Clothes-remover about right as a documentary evidence destroyer? (8)
4 Female resentment of a member's nasty snipe over ambassador lacking love (5,4)
5/15 Awful Hull: wet, vapid, er ... enough to send a person bonkers (5,2,3,4)
6/21 Eye lines giving rise to poncey terror (6,6)
7 Cleo's downfall, giving betrayer a mouthful? (5,4)
8 The bloke gobbled by rough tart with energy – Apollo, maybe (7)
14 To get in it, the publicity-seeker possibly might lie about Bill's tip (9)
15 (see 5dn.)
17 Crack injection – it's casually taken (8)
18 Arse on Penny complemented with rotten top (4,3)
20 Bit of a dance joint, we hear, in London (7)
21 (see 6)
23 Stones, big? Balls! (5)
25 Swinger's ropey necklace? (5)

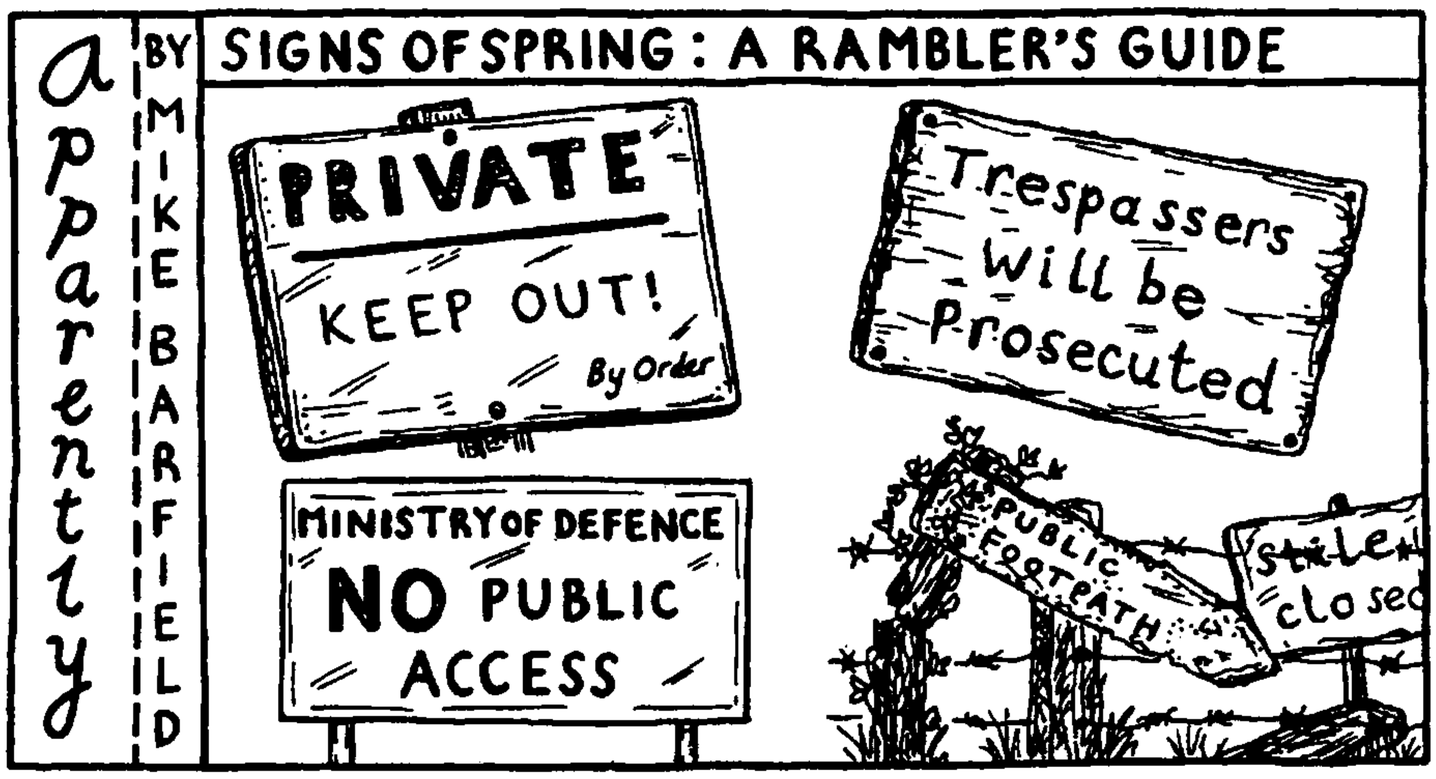
£100 prize to first solution opened on 7.5.99. Entries to 'Crossword', Private Eye, 6 Carlisle Street, London W1V 5RG.

Solution to Crossword No. 128

Winner: JOHN WATMOUGH

ACROSS: 1 Old salt 5 Debrief 9 The Third Way 10 Gag 11 Emma 12/16 Conspiracy theorists 14 Israeli 15 Cabinet 17 Snuff it 19 Mountie 21 Rock-bottom 23 Spur 25/8 Old fogey 26 Spondulicks 27 Endorse 28 Raffles.

DOWN: 1 On the piss 2 Dreamer 3 Ache 4 Terrorist 5 Downs 6 Boys in blue 7 Ingrain 8 (see 25) 13 Self-abuser 15 Camcorder 16 (see 12) 18 Uncoded 20 Topical 21 Rhone 22 T-bone 24 Clef.



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo!

Once again, sad to say, there is only one subject for me to write about this week — and that is the attempts to bring peace to the poor people of Kosovo.

You would have thought that there was not much room for disagreement on this one. Surely everybody is in favour of peace, which means they must also be in favour of the war!

Wasn't it Our Lord who said "I come not to bring peace, immediately, but the sword, for as long as it takes. And then peace." *(Letter To the Macedonians, 7.12, Revised [again] Version)*

Some of you asked me, after my sermon last week, "But, Vicar, is this a just war?"

To which my answer is, of course it is a just war! Just take time out for a moment, to remember what the Church Fathers laid down all those years ago.

This is what that great Anglo-Saxon abbot St Ealth of Bomba had to say in the early 11th Century, in his famous treatise *De Justo Bello*:

1. A war is just when it is fought for a just cause.

2. A war is just when it is fought against men who are not just.

3. A war is just so long as no civilians are hurt (except, of course, by the kind of accident which is unfortunately sometimes unavoidable in times of a just war).

4. A war is just so long as ground troops are not committed, unless they can enter Kosovo unopposed. *(I am paraphrasing a bit here, but St Ealth's meaning is pretty clear!)*

So, you see, there really isn't any room for argument here, as I told our friend in Tesco's, who was once again waiting to accost me at the 8 Items Or Less checkout.

"Ah, Vicar," he said. "I see you are stocking up. Are you expecting it's going to go nuclear?"

"These kind of comments are not very helpful at such a difficult time," I told him, "when it behoves all of us to keep calm and collected."

So saying, our argumentative friend unfortunately tripped over my outstretched foot and fell rather heavily into a display of Easter eggs marked "All at half price".

As I later explained at the meeting of the Irish Mission to St Gerry's, the important thing is that everyone should agree even if they have different opinions.

"We're not going to get anywhere," I told them, "if everyone comes up with different ideas about the way forward."

Which is why I suggested that we should all take time out for a period of quiet reflection lasting a good few months, and then come back and look at it all again in a new light, from a different angle and in a fresh perspective.

That way we can look forward to a time of real peace, in Northern Ireland, Kosovo and everywhere else in the world.

Surely we can all agree on that?

Yours,

NATony

Some of the refugees we haven't found room for. Sorry, this is a small parish, lets face it! T.B.

An Unfortunate Incident

THE VICAR WRITES: *I was very sorry to hear that some parishioners made hurtful and wounding comments about the way Mr Prescott of the Working Men's Club took last week's meeting of the PCC during my unavoidable absence on very important parish business. Just because Mr Prescott got muddled up when he was asked some simple questions, got Christmas confused with Easter and asked for "Any Other Business" at the beginning of the meeting rather than the end, this does not justify people complaining that he is a mentally deficient imbecile who is quite unfit to exercise a position of responsibility in the parish!! T.B.*

St Albion's Primary School

From Mr Blunkett, Chairman of the Governors

I want to put it on record that I have every faith in our inspector Chris Woodhead, who is doing a first-class job in improving educational standards.

It is highly regrettable that his former wife, egged on by certain malcontents, has dredged up an incident from many years ago which has no bearing at all on Chris's ability to carry out his present duties. Chris assures me that all these unhelpful allegations are completely untrue — and I believe him. An educational inspector of his calibre knows all about pupils and making "passes". D.B.

From The Postbag

Dear Sir,

What on earth is happening in this parish? I turn up to church hoping to hear a sermon expounding the traditional beliefs of our church in peace at all costs and an opposition to imperialist warmongering by neo-Colonialist aggressors such as

Yours sincerely,
Mrs Gwyneth Dunwoody,
Adermaston Road.

Mr Campbell, the Editor of the Newsletter, reserves the right to cut all letters for reasons of space. He also reserves the right to be absent for the next few weeks since he has been headhunted to edit the NATO in-house newsletter "War Cry". A.C.

St Albion Parish News — The Paper That Supports Our Bombs!

THATCHER 'BALLISTIC' AS HAGUE TORIES PLEDGE LOYALTY TO BLAIR

by Our Political Staff **George Washedup**

IN his seventh re-launch in two weeks, William Hague yesterday spelled out his plans for the Conservative Party to lose the next election.

"Make no mistake," he said, "we are making a complete break with the past. What our Party now stands for is:

- Ffion's new dress
- an end to private enterprise
- Er...
- ...that's it.

In a series of shock speeches, several of Hague's senior colleagues explained how, after consulting focus groups, the Party was now re-aligning itself with the policies which voters want.

"Our chief finding," said Francis Fraude, "was that New Labour is very popular. Our strategy therefore is to adopt as many of Mr Blair's policies as possible as soon as we can find out what they are."

Other senior Tories, including Lady Thatcher, were quick to lash out at Mr Hague and his colleagues, claiming that in the name of Party unity they should all resign immediately.

Mr Hague's response was to call a press conference announcing a further re-launch for the Party, under which it would change its name to the "Hands Off Our NHS And Comprehensives Party".

"Our clear aim," he said, "is to ensure that at the next election the hated Tory Party gets no votes at all."

ANOTHER NATO MISTAKE

by **John Simpson**, the BBC's Global World Very-Important-Man-In-Suit Correspondent

NATO's decision to target the media is an appalling error.

Today I was taken to see the wrecked studio of Serb TV where people had been literally killed by NATO in what is meant to be a peaceful war.

But was there a more sinister motive behind this bombing? Was the real target actually me?

I was informed by one Serb insider (S. Milosevic, no relation) that NATO "will not stop until they have driven you out of Belgrade and into the rest of the country where we are busy murdering people without you noticing it".

But the whole NATO strategy of attacking myself will fail. I grow stronger in my support for myself every day. In fact, I am more committed than ever to my central aim — which is to write pieces for the Sunday Telegraph saying how important I am.

© John Simpson

WOODY ADOPTS DAUGHTER

Coming soon in the Eye

'WHO CARES?'

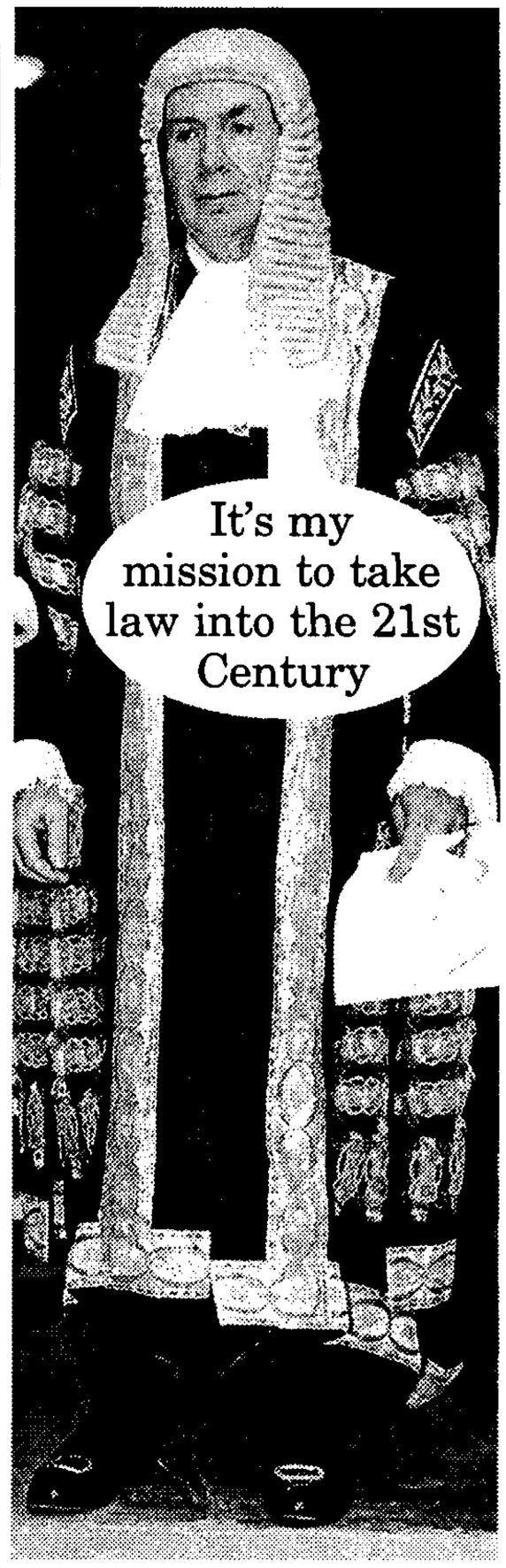
by George Whohe (former MP for Wherethat South)

THE most sensational political memoir since the last one! Read Whohe's no-holds-barred explosive account of the last days of the Tory administration and gasp at his verdict on some of the other key players.

- **John Major** — *"What a decent cove"*
- **Ken Clarke** — *"A decent cove who likes a drink"*
- **John Redwood** — *"Never met him, but probably a decent cove"*
- **Chris Patten** — *"May or may not be a decent cove"*
- **William Hague** — *"Er... er... er..."*
- **Myself** — *"A decent cove and absolutely brilliant though under-rated minister who despite being completely unheard of was absolutely central to all the major decisions that those bastards made without asking me"*

Copies of "Who Cares?" are available in all good remainder shops (price 1p) from tomorrow when the book is published.

IRVINE'S LEGAL REFORMS



Daily Serbograph

WHO IS THE WOMAN BEHIND BLAIROSEVIC?

from Our Neutral Commentator in London **John Simpsonavic**

THE man demonised by the Yugoslav media as a brutal warmonger is in fact no more than a puppet manipulated by an evil woman who holds a Svengali-like grip on him.

The woman, known as Lady Magbeth, is a hardline, totally committed lunatic who gives advice to the otherwise weak and vacillating Blairosevic.

He is in daily contact with her, talking intimately about the prosecution of the war and without her he would *(cont. p. 94)*

Radio 2

What You Will Miss If They Sack Johnnie Walker

Walker *(for it is he)*: It's drive time and if you're in the Paddington area you'll be glad to know that Rita is back in business at £80 a throw and if you're on the M25 in a three mile tailback, you can get Carla to help out on 0898 76253 and... oh... and a late newsflash — the police tell me that there is a lot of congestion up my nose.

And now it's the Sniffers... sorry, the Spinners *(continued in Cell Block 94)*

The Eye's Exciting New Columnist!!!

POLLY FILLER

CRISIS? What crisis? The television may be filled with desperate Kosovan refugees, but there's precious little sign of them in the Filler household.

Don't get me wrong — war is hell. Simon tells me that there hasn't been uninterrupted championship snow boarding from Kyoto on Sky 3 for nearly two whole weeks.

And if the moaning of Simon Slobbo (as I call him) wasn't bad enough, I'm having to look after Charlie the toddler because his nanny got herself fired — by me, for having her nose pierced in Camden Market.

Honestly — doesn't the frivolous slut know there's a war on?

Anyway, so I've had to put an advert for a Kosovan girl in the Lady — having first negotiated the rudeness of their ad sales staff, one of whom brazenly asked me to spell my name out as though she'd never read a newspaper.

And guess what the response is after a whole week? Nothing. Zero. Precisely no Kosovan girls at all replying. You would have thought that every female Kosovan non-smoker with a full driving licence, no boyfriends, three years' minimum experience (NNIB preferred) and the ability to play at least one musical instrument would be beating a path to my door.

But no. Obviously, no one wants a cushy number looking after a spirited toddler (mornings and afternoons only) with the occasional five nights a week babysitting (plus weekends) and the chance to settle in with a nice family, clean their house, iron Simon's shirts and waitress at the odd dinner party.

Well, what can one say? If that is their idea of gratitude, you wonder why we have gone into this beastly war at all?

©Polly Filler

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Eileen Browne, Voice of the BBC's *Listen With Mother*

So. Farewell then
Eileen Browne.
Presenter of
Listen With Mother.

"Are you sitting
Comfortably?"
That was your catchphrase
"Then I'll begin."

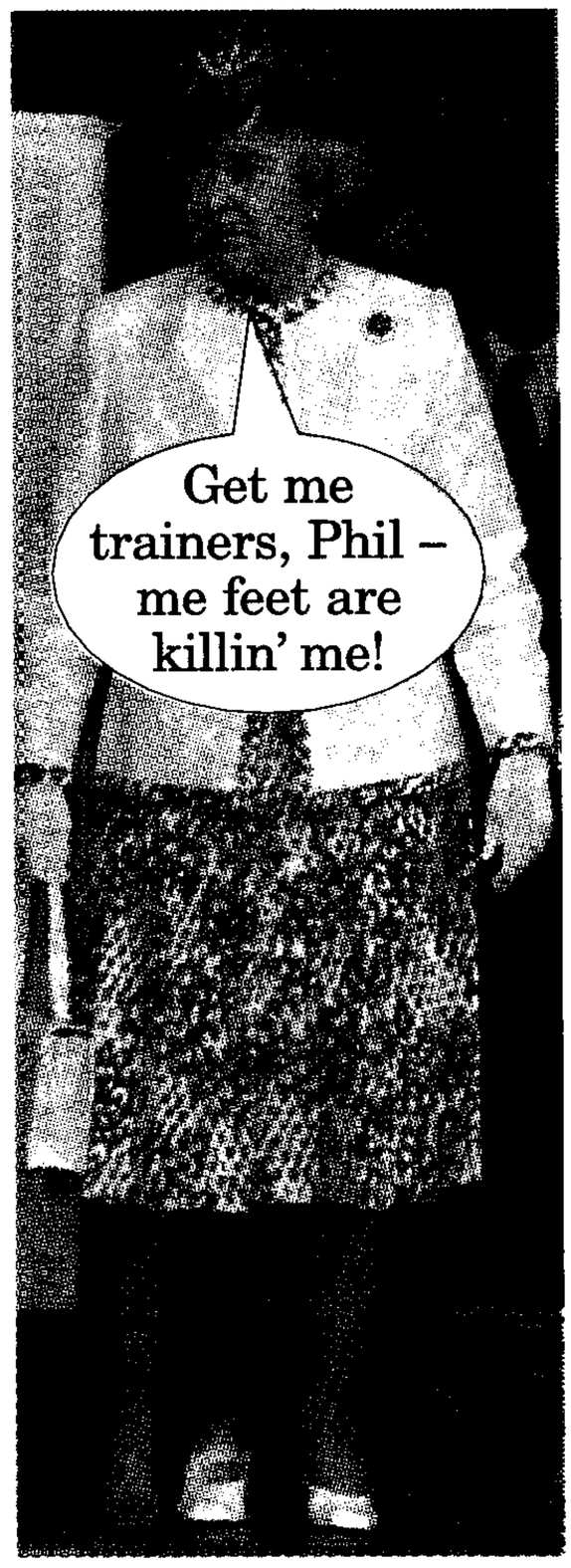
But supposing we were not
Sitting comfortably?
How would you have
Known?

E.J. Thribb (1fi)

THEN AND NOW
HUNTer
This next play has got some kissing in it – you'd better send the children to bed...
TV
This next play features incest, sodomy and rape – you'd better send Granny to bed!
TV

NEW-LOOK QUEEN

(part 94)



COURT CIRCULAR

BUCKINGHAM PALACE
His Royal Highness the Prince William will attend a discotheque-dance to celebrate the eighteenth birthday of the Honourable Sophie Caroline O'Kay-Yargh, the niece once-removed of the Mistress Royal, Camilla Parker Knowles.

The Prince will be accompanied by a number of old Etonians and will consume cocktails known as "Hogwhimperers" in the Sloane Bar before asking Lady Tarara-Boomdeay for a snog by the payphones.

Carriages will be at 3.30am and the procession will be composed as follows:

First Taxi
HRH Prince William

Second Taxi
Charlie Twoshort-Planques and Rupert St John "Bollox" Harcourt

Third Taxi
Misses Binty, Bunty, Minty, Mandy and Minky de la Vere Oranjeeboom

First Bottom Out Of The Window
The Rt Hon Henry Hooray-Lycett-Moon

Second Bottom Out Of The Window
Johnny de la Vere "Pubes" Featherstone-Haugh

First Photographer On Moped
Richard Beardie of the Picture Agency BUM

(That's enough. Ed.)

New Books

Three Men In A Bate

by Jerome K. MacIntyre

British Comedy Classic

THE story of three friends, Tony, Mandy and Gordy, plus their faithful dog Alistair, who decide to take a trip up shit creek, with hilarious results.

YES, IT'S PEACE!

by Our Political Staff
TV's Mr Lobby

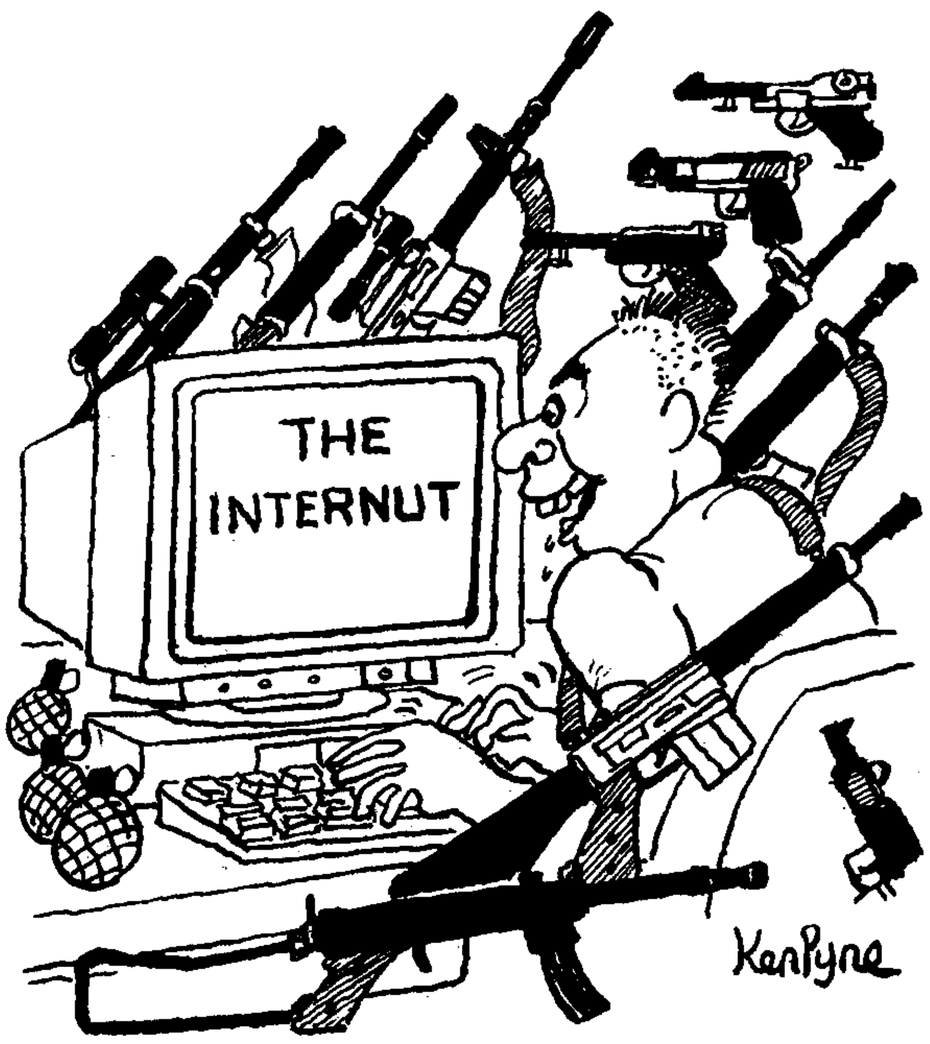
THE world's longest running war came to an unexpected end yesterday when one of the combatants declared peace on the other.

In an emotional tribute to her longtime enemy Mr Heath, Lady Thatcher described him as "possibly the best prime minister this country every had between 1970 and 1974".

She singled out for special praise the election manifesto Heath offered to the nation in 1970.

"As we all know," she said, "this was an inspirational document which Mr Heath never had the courage to implement, leaving it to me to sort out, thus winning the Conservative Party three successive election victories, which is two more than he ever did, and three more than will ever be won by this pitiful little man they've got in now."

She then called on NATO to extend its bombing campaign to Mr Heath and Mr Hague, so that she could be returned to her rightful place as supreme ruler of the universe.



That Thatcher 20th Anniversary Dinner In Full

Yesterday's Men-u

Battered Squit

— ❋ —

Pickled Old Trout

— ❋ —

Sulking Pig

America — A Sick Society

Exclusive To All Newspapers

ONCE again, the world has been shocked by the depths of depravity to which modern America has sunk.

The United States is mired in its obsession with guns, violence and the wilder reaches of psychopathic disorder.

An ordinary suburban schoolroom is littered with the bodies of innocent schoolchildren.

Thank goodness it could not happen here, in a sleepy Scottish village, whoops, er, will this do?

***On other pages:* ● Brixton Bomb — New Suspects ● Brick Lane — Neo-Nazis responsible? ● Kalashnikov shootings in Bolton ● Mardi Gras Bomber Sentenced ● Hungerford Twelve Years On ● Bulger Killers — New Appeal ● Dunblane, Could It Happen Here? pp. 2-106**

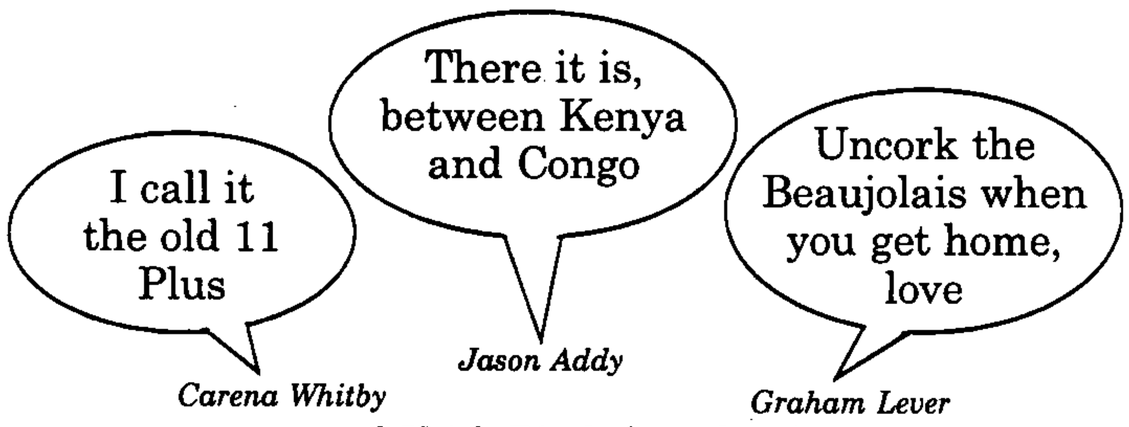
Roy of the Fuggers
FUGHAM F.C. HAVE FINALLY WON PROMOTION.
WE'RE GOING UP!
FIRST FLOOR. MEN'S FASHION
THE FANS HAVE BEEN GREAT BOSS
YES AND I'M GOING TO REWARD THEM WITH A NEW FANZINE
MILLIONS OF FREE UNSOLD COPIES FOR EVERYONE!
BUT IT'S NOT ABOUT FOOTBALL BOSS
Punch
NOR AM I YOU STUPID FUGGER!

THAT WOODHEAD COMPETITION

THANKS to the hundreds of readers who sent in entries to the Smutty Bubble Competition.

Most were of course unsuitable for reproduction in a family satirical magazine, being variations on the theme of "Are you the Head Girl?", "Is this too hard for you?", "Do you like my 34% rise?", "It's time for the oral", "How about an inspection behind the bike sheds?", "Do you do French?" and "I'll show you how 50 goes into 17."

A year's subscription, however, goes to the following



Carena Whitby *Jason Addy* *Graham Lever*

and Keith Birch (see photo)

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Anthony Newley, husband of Joan Collins

So. Farewell then
Anthony Newley.
Actor, singer, songwriter,
And director.

Stop The World,
I Want To Get Off!

That was your
Greatest hit.

And now
You have!

E.J. Thribb (17½)
Poet Laureate Designate

FIRST RAT EVER TO HEAD BBC

by Our Media Staff

A LONDON-BORN rodent, Mr Roland Rat, 53, is to become the first ever rat to be appointed Director-General of the BBC.

The rat has a long distinguished tail *(Surely, career in television? Ed.)*, furry whiskers and small beady eyes.

HIGH RATTINGS

Mr Rat began his broadcasting career on breakfast television, where he saved the ailing AM-TV programme with his unique blend of impromptu humour and incredibly cheap space-filling garbage.

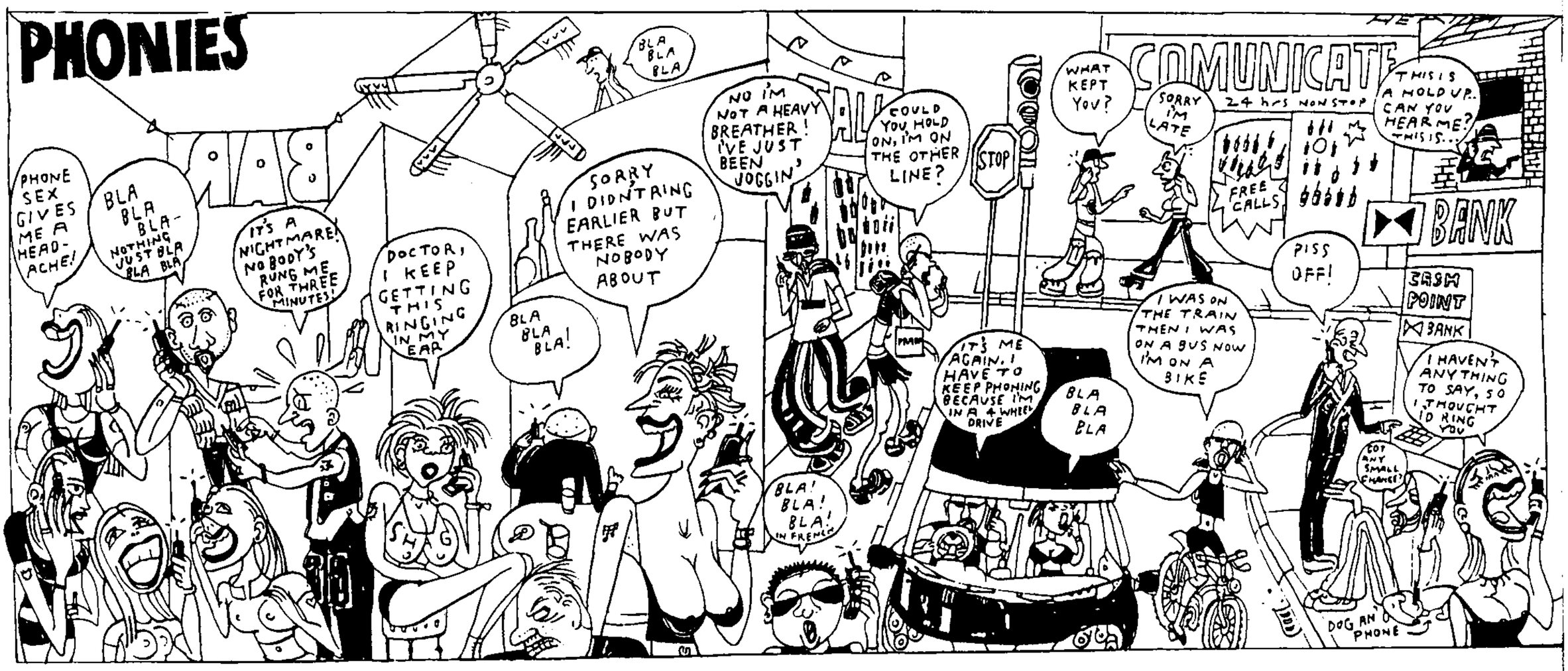
Since then, Mr Rat's career in television has been less public, but he has held a number of distinguished positions behind the wainscoat. *(Surely, behind the scenes of some of our leading TV companies? Ed.)*

One of Mr Rat's greatest admirers is Sir Pigling Bland, the first pig ever to be chairman of the BBC.

But Sir Pigling makes it clear that the decision to appoint his friend the Rat will not be his. It will be taken by the governors who will act entirely independently in complying with his instructions to appoint the rat.

Your Drains Tonight 16

HEATH'S PRIVATE VIEW


PHONIES
BLA BLA BLA
PHONE SEX GIVES ME A HEAD-ACHE!
BLA BLA BLA- NOTHING JUST BLA BLA BLA
IT'S A NIGHTMARE! NO BODY'S RUNG ME FOR THREE MINUTES!
DOCTOR, I KEEP GETTING THIS RINGING IN MY EAR
SORRY I DIDN'T RING EARLIER BUT THERE WAS NOBODY ABOUT
BLA BLA BLA!
NO I'M NOT A HEAVY BREATHER! I'VE JUST BEEN JOGGIN'
COULD YOU HOLD ON, I'M ON THE OTHER LINE?
STOP
BLA! BLA! BLA! IN FRENCH
IT'S ME AGAIN. I HAVE TO KEEP PHONING BECAUSE I'M IN A 4 WHEEL DRIVE
BLA BLA BLA
WHAT KEPT YOU?
SORRY I'M LATE
I WAS ON THE TRAIN THEN I WAS ON A BUS NOW I'M ON A BIKE
COMUNICATE
24 hrs NONSTOP
FREE CALLS
THIS IS A HOLD UP. CAN YOU HEAR ME? THIS IS...
BANK
PISS OFF!
CASH POINT
BANK
I HAVEN'T ANYTHING TO SAY, SO I THOUGHT I'D RING YOU
GOT ANY SMALL CHANGE?
DOG AN PHONE

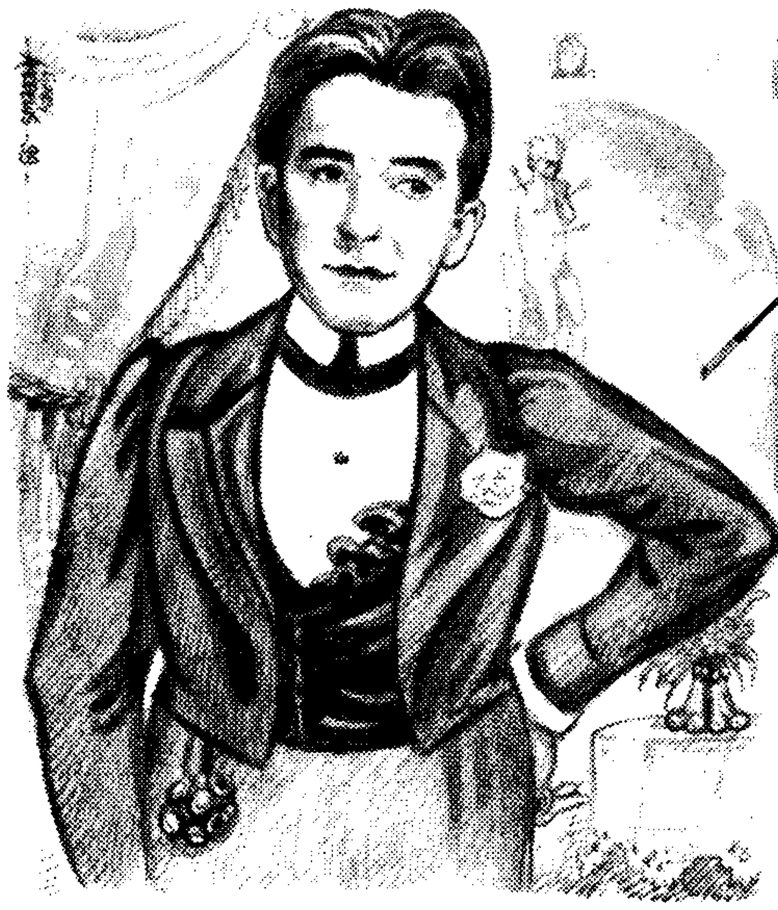
Romantic Fiction At Its Best

From The Pen That Brought You Heir Of Sorrows And Love In The Saddle

BORN TO BE QUEENY

by Sylvie Krin

The love story of the decade that dare not speak its name!



THE STORY SO FAR: The dashing young Tony Blair, leader of the New Labour Party, has won the heart of the whole nation — and not just the nation! Behind the scenes, his two closest friends are vying desperately for his affection. It was a ménage à trois from hell...

Now read on...

"Don't you ever speak to me like that again, Gordy." The front door of Number Ten slammed shut with a sickening crash, as the svelte Minister Without Portfolio flounced out into the night.

The burly constable on the door sighed.

"Good night, Mr Mandelson," he cried cheerily.

"No, it jolly well isn't. It's perfectly horrid. That's the last time I'll ever help Tony again."

And with that he was gone, leaving only a faint fragrance of Giverny Pour L'Homme on the evening air.

Back in the elegant drawing room, the handsome young Prime Minister sobbed quietly, with his head in his hands.

"Don't take on so, Tony," soothed the saturnine young Scotsman, whose mastery of finance had won the admiration of the entire world, placing a comforting hand on his leader's shoulder.

"I just can't understand it, Gordy," gulped the Prime Minister. "Why can't you and Mandy get on? You've got so much in common — me, for instance."

"That's just it," protested the beetle-browed son of the manse. "It's come to the point where you've got to choose between us. We can't go on like this."

"Don't make me choose, Gordon," responded the tousle-haired inventor of the Third Way. "It's just not fair to any of us. You know I love you both equally. Let's not throw it all away, all that we've dreamed of and hoped for and planned for and longed for..."

His voice trailed off disconsolately.

"You're right, Prime Minister. My feelings got the better of me. Beneath this dour and prudent exterior beats the heart of a passionate man. Och, aye, the Noo Labour." He broke into his distinctive Lowland brogue.

At that very moment the door burst open, and there stood a motor-cycle messenger, clad entirely in black leather, holding a letter marked "Extremely Personal". "I'm a friend of Peter's," he said. "Which one of you is the Prime Minister?"

With one voice, Tony and Gordie chorused, "I am."

"Oh, sorry, I was forgetting myself," Gordon went on embarrassingly.

But Tony had already snatched at the pink missive, eagerly tearing it open and running his eyes avidly down its contents.

"My dearest Prime Minister," he read to himself. *"I cannot tell you how upset I was tonight over our silly disagreement on whether we should charge VAT on child benefit. I can't believe that you sided with Gordon, after all we have meant to each other. Honestly, to suggest a rate of five-and-a-half percent is nothing more than a slap in the face, making a complete mockery of our friendship. I don't mind telling you, Tony, that Gordon has to go — or I will. There, I've said it! It's up to you now, dearest heart. Be strong. Be kind. Be sensible. Vote Labour. You know it makes sense. Your loving friend, Mandy."*

"Well, what does he say?" asked the gruff denizen of Number 11. "Is he apologising for his unforgiveable rudeness in daring to challenge my plans to harmonise VAT across a whole range of benefits?"

"Yes, it's a wonderful letter," replied the blue-eyed statesman, hurriedly scrunching up the note and cramming it into his pocket.

"He wants us all to work together as we used to in the old days. It's going to be such fun, isn't it, Gordon?"

"Aye, I'll drink to that," responded the cautious Scotsman, a sardonic little smile round his finely chiselled mouth. "You can rely on me, Tony."

"You can rely on me, Tony. That was a wonderful letter you wrote me. I don't mind telling you, I've got tears in my eyes."

Mandy eased back into the specially-made Habitat white leather sofa, in the drawing room of his luxurious Notting Hill maisonette. He gazed down at the precious note, written out in the Prime Minister's own hand, and read it for the fourth time.

"Dearest Minister, Please, please don't be cross with me. Gordon has apologised for all the beastly things he said to you about VAT. You know, he didn't mean it. We mustn't behave like people in one of those horrid Greek tragedies, like the one where Achilles sulks in his tent and lets the Trojans win. No, we're all going to work together from now on. Let tomorrow be the start of the rest of our lives. We shall be the Three Musketeers. Remember? One for all, and all for me. Gordos, Mandos and Blairtagnan!! It's going to be such fun. All my loving, Your friend and Prime Minister, Tony."

Mandy's tears of joy dropped softly onto the Number Ten headed paper. He had misjudged Gordon. It was all going to be alright.

"It's all going to be alright! I've got the document right here." Gordy was talking quietly into his mobile phone.

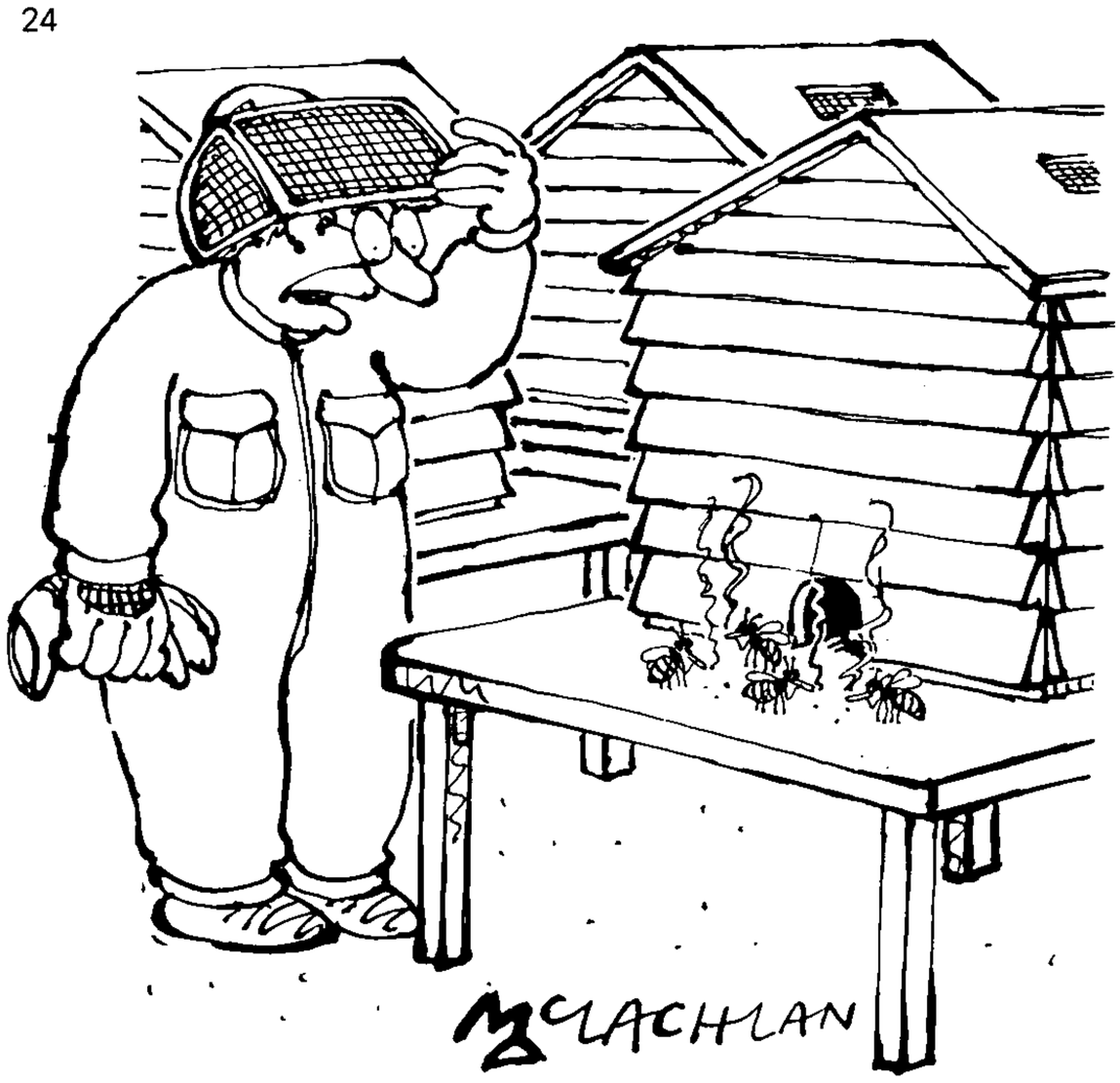
At the other end of the line, an excited journalist could scarcely contain himself. "We'll have to hold the front page for this one," he enthused. "It'll be the scoop of the year."

"Of course, I'm sorry for Mandy," rasped the menacing tones of the latter day Bismarck of finance. "But it was an unforgiveable error of judgement on his part, for which he deserves to pay the full price."

"You mean, accepting the £373,000 loan from Geoffrey Robinson for his luxury Notting Hill penthouse?" queried the eager hack.

"Och, no," replied Gordie, his face lighting up for the first time in months with a wintry smile. "Trying to come between me and Tony..."

© Sylvie Krin, The Trouser Press, Old Compton Street, Soho



"I don't believe this! They're standing outside having a smoke"

Radio Four

The Today Programme

Sue McGhastly *(for it is she)*: The time is 7.18 and later in the programme we shall be talking to Paddy Ashdown live from Albania and Sir Leon Brittan on why 87 percent of Sweden's businessmen are saying "Yes to the Euro". And "Are warts good for you?" We'll be talking to a doctor about a new study reported in this week's Lancet. But, first, one of the most exciting archaeological discoveries in the history of the world. An old coffin has been dug up in the City of London, and it is about to be opened live, specially for this programme.

Professor Ghoul in the City, are you there? You're just about to open this coffin, and you're expecting to find something in it, aren't you?

Prof Ghoul: That's right, Sue. We're opening the coffin now.

(Creaking noise)

McGhastly: Can you see anything interesting? Dead bodies falling out of it, that kind of thing?

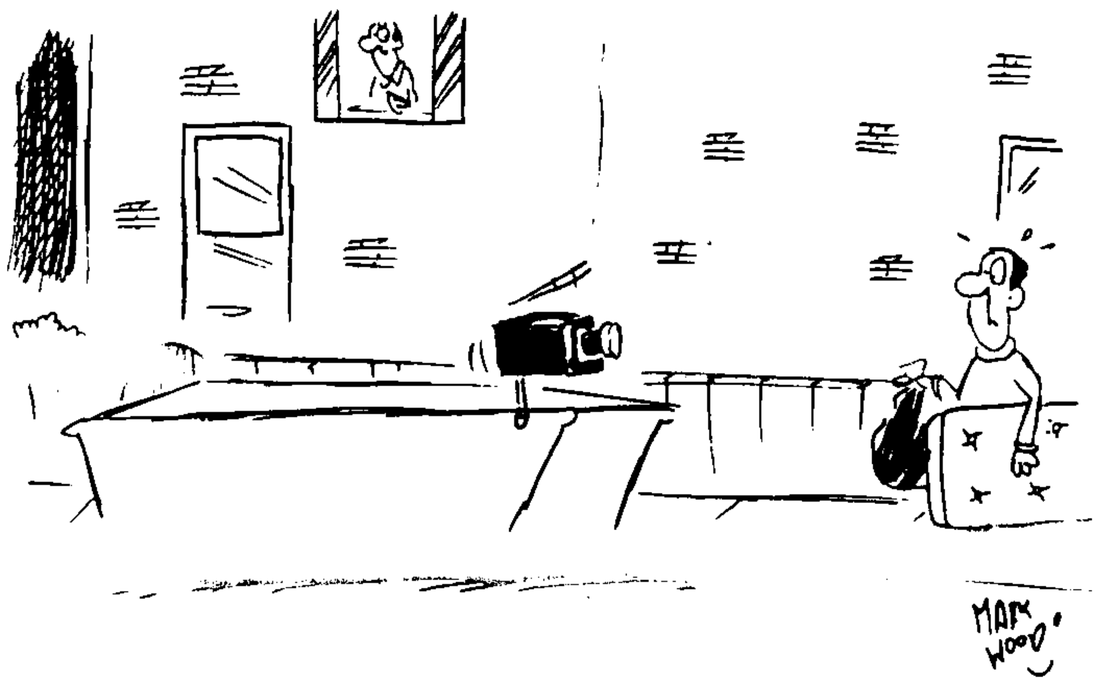
Ghoul: Well, only one so far. I can see some bones, dust, that sort of thing.

McGhastly: Would you say the person in the coffin had died a painful death? Could he or she have been a rape victim, possibly?

Ghoul: It's too early to say yet, Sue. There isn't really much in here. It's very old, you see.

McGhastly: But it is a genuine dead body, isn't it? Could the victim have been killed in a massacre, do you think, involving thousands of people? Or possibly murdered by a deranged psychopath while walking their dog around Roman London, and the killer never found? Well, that's all we've got time for. And now Thought For The Day, by our resident Sikh, Grobelaar Burundi.

Sikh *(for it is she)*: To those of us who watched last night's match between Manchester United and Juventus, the words of the 14th Guru *(cont'd Khz 94)*



Advertisement

Conservative Party Appeal

Ten years ago there were millions of Conservatives all over Britain. Today there are almost none left and those that survive in isolated pockets like Kensington and Tunbridge Wells are in severe danger of extinction.

Due to intensive labour vote farming and the activities of scientific focus groups, the countryside that was once alive with the song of the Tory is now a silent and barren wasteland.

How You Can Help

The only way to preserve Britain's Tories is to adopt one and pay for its upkeep.

£10 buys Alan Clark a glass of Chateau Lafitte

£20 buys Kenneth Clarke a cigar

£100 buys Edward Heath a zimmer frame

£200 buys Michael Portillo a one-way train ticket back to his native Spain

£10 million buys an advertising campaign to persuade the public that William Hague is really Tony Blair.

Don't let them die! **Send whatever you can afford now to: The Con-servation Party, Dunrulin, Bexhill-on-Sea.**

POETRY CORNER

In Apologia Dave Swarbrick, Violinist with the Fairport Convention Folk Group

So. Hullo then
Dave Swarbrick.

The Daily Telegraph said
You were
Dead.

But you
Were not.

I apologise for my poem
Which I wrote
On hearing the news.

Now I will have to save it
For
A later date.

E.J. Thribb (17½)

COMING OUT SOON

NOTTING HILL

The romantic comedy sensation of the summer — a young floppy-haired English spin doctor called Peter falls in love with the incredibly famous American-style Prime Minister, Tony. Their will they/won't they relationship charmingly explores the ups and downs of a love affair between an obscure lad from Hartlepool and an international megastar. Will they live happily ever after or will Peter get sacked as soon as he is no longer useful? Watch out for a wonderful cameo by Peter's stuccoed house in Notting Hill which is central to the film's plot.

Cast In Full

Peter . . . . . .HUGH GRANT
Tony . . . . . .JULIA ROBERTS

From the team that brought you
Four Sackings and a Resignation!

EURO SHAG

Matchbox label

BOTTLES GALORE LIMITED (IN LIQUIDATION)

Legal Notice

Bombay Aloo (Potato Bhajee) ...
Baigan Bhajee (Aborigines) .....
Bhindi Bhajee(Okra)... .....

Balti Tandoori Menu

DIARY

Shit.
That's not a word you're comfortable with?
You're not comfortable with that word?
You're not comfortable with that shit?
Well I don't give a shit.
So shit, shit, shit, shit.
And shit.

I WROTE the above poem, which I called "Shit", while being driven in my courtesy limousine from Heathrow to Campden Square. Such was my fury that I had completed a final draft before we had left the airport precincts. I later re-titled the poem "Utter Shit", giving it extra force.

Recognising it at once as a very important piece of work, I biked it round to the editor of The Observer for immediate publication.

In that Sunday's Observer: nothing.

In the next Sunday's Observer: nothing.

I got put through to the editor: "Oh dear, Harold," he said. "It's obviously a very striking poem but..."

"Don't 'Oh dear, Harold' me, chum. I thought you were a serious newspaper," I said. "Can't you see it's about what the Americans are doing? If you don't print it, the war will continue and you'll have blood on your hands. It's up to you, chum."

At this point, my wife, Lady Antonia, came in bearing a plate of fairy cakes. I took one and stuffed it into my mouth. Then another. Then another. And another. I like fairy cakes. Fairy cakes are what I like.

"Personally, I love the poem, Harold, but I feel our readers might not..." said the editor.

At this point, I exploded. Fairy cake shot out of my mouth like a hundred bombs from a nuclear arsenal, hitting random civilian targets — the smoked-glass coffee-table, the porcelain figures on the mantelpiece, the carriage clock, the sleeping Pekinese, Antonia's new frock, clean on that morning — without a thought for human life.

The next day, I wrote an open letter to the Prime Minister of this country:

"Dear Mr Blair, I enclose a copy of my most recent poem. It is 'Utter Shit'. I believe that, if we are to divert a disaster, you should give it sober thought.

It was written to express my feelings of

HAROLD PINTER

revulsion at the way the Americans are blowing the shit out of Kosovo and fucking it up the arse before wiping their noses with the soiled toilet paper and tossing it on the ground to be sniffed over by dogs. A more mature attitude is needed.

My wife, Lady Antonia, and I agree that this is a situation which cannot be allowed to go on. The US elephant must be stopped. It has trumpeted too long, keeping its neighbours up at night. First we must shoot it. Dead. Then we must cut off its tusks. With wire wool, we must then grind those tusks down. So we can sell the powder as an aphrodisiac to underprivileged nations. Then they can fuck the dead corpse of America just like America fucked the shit out of them. I believe this to be the only feasible solution to the appalling state of affairs developing in Eastern Europe at the present time."

No reply. Just the usual piss — The Prime Minister thanks you for your "Utter Shit", was interested to hear your etcetera etcetera.

But it didn't end there. The next day, a man in his forties appeared at the door. In uniform. Said he'd come to read the meter.

"What meter? We don't have any meter," I said, barring his way. I experienced an overwhelming urge to wrestle him to the ground and spit my spittiest spit in his face.

"Yes we do, darling. The electricity meter, just outside the servants' sitting-room in the basement," said my wife, Lady Antonia. She was wearing a fresh frock, clean on.

"You'd better come in then," I said. I wanted to smack him in the bollocks. Hard.

Something about the man alerted me that he was actually a senior Cabinet minister. I knew instinctively that he had been sent by the Blair regime at Downing Street to flush me out. I was a dissident. "They want to flush dissidents down the toilet," I whispered to Antonia.

Antonia agreed. "Lavatory," she said.

"All done," said the man in his forties.

"Now clear bloody off," I said.

"Harold says thank you so much for coming," repeated Antonia. "I'll show you out."

"Yes," I said, "Antonia will show you the bloody door, matey. And tell your chums in Downing Street that I'm not going to take it up the arse any longer."

The next day, I read that they had dropped another lot of bombs on Belgrade. The present regime must have thought it would teach me a lesson. Well, you've got another think coming, Mr Tony Bloody Blair. You can send a meter man round and attach electrical cables to my genitals whenever you like, but you're still not going to silence me, chum.

Some time later, a man calls. He represents himself as a postman. Cap, uniform, the lot. He has an electricity bill. They want to charge us for our electricity. The same electricity that goes into making those planes that have fucked the shit out of Belgrade. Now they are trying to force us to pay for their crap. Antonia and I are dissidents — dissi-bloody-dents — in our own land. Next they'll lock a ball and chains round Antonia's ankles and gag her so that she won't be able to read an extract from her latest work, "Dearest Darling Duchesses: A Social History" at the Waterstone's wine-and-cheese evening. Bastards.

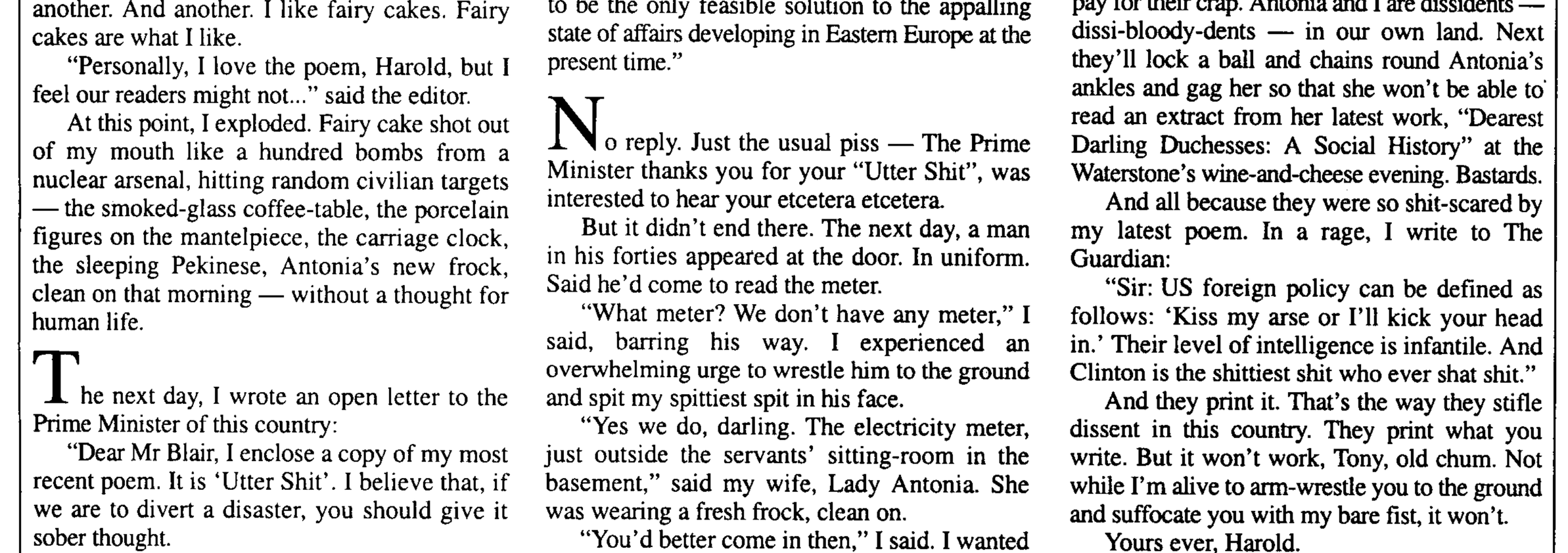
And all because they were so shit-scared by my latest poem. In a rage, I write to The Guardian:

"Sir: US foreign policy can be defined as follows: 'Kiss my arse or I'll kick your head in.' Their level of intelligence is infantile. And Clinton is the shittiest shit who ever shat shit."

And they print it. That's the way they stifle dissent in this country. They print what you write. But it won't work, Tony, old chum. Not while I'm alive to arm-wrestle you to the ground and suffocate you with my bare fist, it won't.

Yours ever, Harold.

PS. Lady Antonia sends her regards.


WHAT'S THE TIME, JOHNSON?
JUST TURNED SIX O'CLOCK, SIR.
OH GOOD! SO THE OLD SUN IS OVER THE YARD ARM?
YES, SIR.
IN THAT CASE I THINK I'LL HAVE A QUICK STIFFENER BEFORE DINNER.
VERY GOOD, SIR.
WILL THAT BE ONE VIAGRA OR TWO THIS EVENING?
BETTER MAKE IT TWO. I FEEL LIKE GETTING PISSED...

Literary Review

Herbert dip

Others
James Herbert
(Macmillan, £16.99)

YOU can get a pretty good idea of what a writer thinks of his darling productions by taking a look at the author biography located on the inside of the back jacket. James Herbert's — which I refuse to believe he didn't write himself, or at least heavily vet — goes like this:

"James Herbert is not just Britain's number one bestselling writer of thriller/horror fiction, a position he has held ever since publication of his first novel, but is one of our greatest popular novelists, whose books are sold in thirty-three other languages, including Russian and Chinese. Widely imitated and hugely influential, his eighteen novels have sold more than forty-two million copies worldwide."

Forty-two million of the little sods, eh? (Oh, and a glance at his new one suggests that the original language on which the translators base their stuff is, narrowly, English.)

Now I wouldn't want to use a word like "vainglorious", but I think we can assume on this evidence that Mr Herbert fancies himself a bit. In doing so, he falls into a burgeoning literary catchment area, what might be called the low-brow-with-pretensions class. The members of this increasingly petulant cadre — Ken Follett is another prominent badge-holder — aren't merely content to trouser their six-figure advances. No siree! They want to be taken seriously as well. And sure enough, a feature of the publicity attending *Others* was some protracted whinges about lack of serious critical attention and the pseudonymous trashing that Martin Amis might just have administered to Herbert's first novel back in 1973.

Poor old Jim. He wants it all, you see, in the same way that our Ken can be found plaintively joking — not quite jokily enough, alas — about the Booker Prize. It hardly needs saying, in the light of this preamble, that *Others*, which some harassed Macmillan blurb-writer has been ordered to mark down as "stunning and controversial", is in fact merely preposterous: an extraordinary rigmarole in which a badly disabled private investigator on the trail of a baby taken from its mother at birth starts seeing things and is forced to confront the, um, "enigma of his own existence" (there's also a clunking PC sub-text, where the hero's disability is balanced by everyone else in his agency being gay or black).

Lest the reader think that the result isn't worth looking at, however, it should immediately be said that there are real signs of the tremendous labour that must have gone into this. For a start there is the desperate striving to be up-to-date. This takes in everything from knowledgeable descriptions of what our young people are listening to ("Jungle or Techno, Nu Energy or Drum 'n' Bass, Trance or Speed...") to taxonomic despatches from the modern pharmacopoeia (cocaine, you'll be pleased to learn, is also known as snow, coke, C and charlie).

In some ways this anxiety to please, to set up as a modern style-reporter rather than a duff old dime-store scaremonger is rather endearing. Old Jim, standing there in his leathers and his wrap-round shades before an eerie marshscape, he'd much rather be Will Self, y'know.

Oh dear, though; for all the author's stern end-note to the effect that "This story is based on a true incident that occurred in a certain children's hospital some years ago..." it's hard to imagine anyone with the slightest feeling for plausibility (or language, or one or two other things) being taken in for more than 20 pages of this.

About halfway through I found myself thinking of the late J.L. Carr, who at one point calculated that novel-writing paid him 17p an hour. If I were James Herbert I think I'd sit quietly back and be grateful rather than whining on about "respect", wouldn't you?

"I wish he'd stop invading our private life"

MANDY: A NEW CHAPTER?

COULD Donald Macintyre's hagiography of the Prince of Darkness, aka Peter Mandelson, mark the beginning of the resurrection of St Peter?

An hour-long film on Channel 4 devoted to the man currently without portfolio swiftly followed Macintyre's book launch. Conveniently skating over Mandelson's years in exile under John Smith and pronouncing him innocent of duplicity in backing both Gordon Brown and Tony Blair for the Labour leadership, Macintyre's deeply moving snow-job for Mandy ended with the less than heartwarming scenario: namely that Mandy will be back after a couple of years' "hard work".

The day before the showing of the film, the *Mirror* devoted two pages to the "great debate", with Mandy baiter Paul Routledge cast against resurrectionist MP Denis MacShane. Mandy has not been idle either, showing more than usual devotion to his Hartlepool constituency and gathering around himself a group of young Blairite turks who meet regularly at his Notting Hill home under the guise of the "Way Back" group.

Their number is believed to include James Purnell, a former aide to Blair in opposition and now a member of the Number 10 policy unit, and Tim Allan, an early prototype spin doctor who left Blair to take the Murdoch shilling. Yet while Mandy enjoys a semi-official role as "new" Labour's ambassador to Berlin and remains close to Blair, the Way Back group may have its work cut out.

It will have occurred to every lobby hack, save possibly Macintyre, that Mandy's forced departure from the centre of government had the immediate and lasting effect of ending the trench warfare at the highest reaches of the cabinet. Gone are the poisonous briefings about "colleagues", especially Gordon Brown, and in their place sits the more reassuring figure of Jack "The Enforcer" Cunningham, as Mandy's replacement. And then there is the not inconsequential figure of Tony Blair himself, whose new-found flights of Churchillian rhetoric owe little to Mandy, and everything to the fact that Britain's new war leader has proved to himself that he can survive and prosper without his former helper.

Pseuds Corner

And undoubtedly any list of Cambridge alumni would include some of the finest and most creative minds in the world: Isaac Newton, John Milton, Charles Darwin, Joan Robinson, Stephen Hawking, David Attenborough, Michael Winner, Emma Thompson, Eleanor Bron, Stephen Fry...

CAM (Cambridge University Alumni Magazine)

THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON SEX AND GENDER: TRANSGENDER AGENDA FOR THE END OF THE MILLENNIUM
Exeter College, Oxford University, 1998

This, the third interdisciplinary conference designed to bring together members of the transgendered, intersexed and transsexual communities with 'specialists' from the medical professions and academic and social theorists, was a remarkable and memorable event. Transgender is the most contentious and challenging aspect of gender theory to emerge in recent years. For those unfamiliar with the term, it denotes an identity that celebrates the disalignment between one's embodied sex and one's gender affiliation. Hitherto pathologised as a gender disorder, it has become the sign under which queer activists and academics celebrate difference and diversity, and challenge the orthodoxies of medical and academic theories of normative gender and identity.

ASHLEY TAUCHERT
'Conference reports', AUT Woman

The first time the Queen Mother came to dine I was nine years old. I hid at the top of the stairs to watch her arrive. She was wearing a dress that appeared to have been made out of gossamer, not so much sewn together as wafted into a whole by some miraculous breeze. Around her neck were sapphires one can only describe as the sort that might require six men to lift, only her swan's neck bore them as lightly as if they had been candyfloss.

PETRONELLA WYATT
Daily Telegraph

"We aren't prepared to provide a list of all the people we have ever shagged. We don't think that's helpful," George closes the conversation primly.

But perhaps this hiatus is the most interesting aspect of their art, articulating the paradoxical and painful dissonance of the human state, as at one moment we put on our public face, the next crouch trouserless on a lavatory pan.

And perhaps this is the "consolation" which Gilbert and George offer those who go to see their art: that the higher up the tree of life we climb, the better the gawping masses below can see our bottoms. Nothing can matter too much when you remember that.

"No. Nothing matters. Our motto is that nothing matters," Gilbert says. "Nothing matters, nothing matters," Gilbert *[sic]* agrees.

RACHEL CAMPBELL-JOHNSTON
The Times

Contributors: Anthony Laude, P. Sullivan, J. James, Michael Henderson.

£10 paid for entries

BOOKS & BOOKMEN

■ *EDDIE BELL of HarperCollins has gone public with his dismay at Anthony "Fatty" Cheetham's parsimonious attitude to World Book Day* (Eye 973).

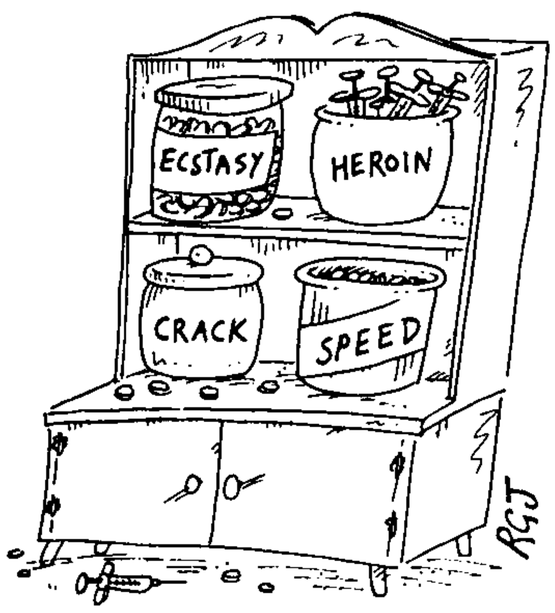
Briefing the World Book Day troops at the Booksellers Association conference in Amsterdam, the burly Glaswegian and former folk singer brandished a can of Heineken, saying it was "for those who think that World Book Day is small beer", before proposing to send the beverage to Fatty with a £10,000 price tag to cover the missing donation.

Still, at least Fatty can comfort himself with the fact that Orion is not alone in refusing to cough up. For all Richard Branson's ostentatious generosity in other areas, Virgin Publishing has not contributed a bean to Bell's initiative, despite having had a bumper year of growth.

■ AUDIOBOOK publishers have been angered by a spring clean at WH Smug's Swindon warehouse, which resulted in the return of a vast quantity of unsold spoken word titles, some up to five years old.

The tapes had apparently not found favour with the buying public, but the largescale return led publishers to wonder whether the products had ever made it to the shopfloor in the first place.

Inept ordering seems the most likely cause of the vast overstock. Does this mean Smug is pulling out of the audiobook market? Not a bit of it. Publishers report that the retailer is continuing to order tapes at its usual level, but it must be assumed they will meet any future return avalanches from Smug with increased contempt.



IRVINE WELSH DRESSER

■ LADY Henrietta Rous, self-styled "editor" of *The Ossie Clark Diaries* (reviewed in *Eye* 964), seems to have regarded the nitty-gritty preparation of her turgid and now much remaindered volume as some way beneath her station.

She recruited several underlings via the small ads of the *Spectacularlyboring* to whip Clark's pisspoor pensées into shape and provide her with summaries of each year's jottings, paying them disproportionately small amounts from her £20,000 advance.

Having done a fair amount of work for not much money — and having coped with all the telephone calls from a panicking Rous, who has a knack for losing bits of paper sent to her — imagine the horror of one researcher who learnt that on publication he was not even entitled to a free reference copy.

Having ordered one from a public library, the researcher was then greatly impressed by all the terribly hard work milady had herself put into the book. In particular, the chapter introductions seemed extremely familiar — the environmentally-friendly Rous having simply recycled summaries the researcher had prepared, or so he thought, simply to help the dim aristocrat in her own navigation through the journals.

■ WITH an announcement expected in the next month, the shortlist for the vacant poet laureateship is now apparently reduced to two.

Various prime candidates excluded themselves, or were excluded, on the grounds of nationality (Seamus Heaney "too Irish" and so on), one or two of the more fanciful suggestions advanced by government ministers (such as Mo Mowlam's advocacy of Sir Paul McCartney) were happily ignored. This left a straight fight between the establishment candidate Andrew Motion and the anti-establishment (and therefore alternative establishment) candidate Carol Ann Duffy.

No idea of Blair's preference, but according to informed sources "Andrew wants it badly". Well, who wouldn't?

Meanwhile, the idea of simply appointing the best poet, regardless of age, ideological leanings or sex was at no time canvassed. Even at this late stage is it too much to hope that someone somewhere could spare a thought for D.J. Enright, who despite being in his late 70s can knock Andrew and Carol Ann into a cocked hat, and might actually produce some poems that people wanted to read?

■ AS reported in *Eye* 970, the Jonathan Cape imprint of Random House withdrew *All Dressed Up* by Jonathon Green following a successful libel suit by ex-Turd George Harrison, and threats of further legal action from Mick Jagger and artist Caroline Coon.

Evidently though the publisher has not put a great deal of effort into recalling the offending items, as copies of the unexpurgated hardback were spotted in a central London remainder bookshop earlier this month, retailing at the knockdown price of £6.99.

"Daddy's just secured a £250,000 advance for your first novel, darling"

REMAINDERS OF THE DAY

THE BOOK: *The Journals of Woodrow Wyatt, Vol I.*
The advance: £150,000 to Wyatt's wife, Verushka. Exorbitant for the ramblings of a dead loon.
The hype: Serialised in the *Sunday Times*, Wyatt's writings were meant to be the explosive inside story of Margaret Thatcher's government and society gossip. When published by Macmillan at £25 last October, the great and good rushed to buy copies to see what "The Voice of Reason" had said about them.
The slide: Unfortunately they were the only ones who *did* buy the book, hence the pile of copies now on sale in Waterstone's for £1.

'Bookworm'

LUVVIES

You tear your soul open thinking people are going to know the difference between actors who do that and actors who don't, and they don't. My God, why don't I just stand there and speak it really well?... It helps to have a bit of the priest about you to be Hamlet. I think the sense grows in him that he has been called. I always think the theatre is a bit like that too. There are very few rewards. Isn't there a group of actors who call themselves the nuns and the priests?

PAUL RHYS
Time Out

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries

MUSIC & MUSICIANS

DOUBLE standards seem to be at play at the Royal Opera.

When most of the year's productions were scrapped by the ROH, many singers who found themselves with cancelled contracts asked if they would still be paid. Yes they would, came the reply, so long as they did not accept another engagement elsewhere in the same period. This would be the equivalent of being paid to appear in two places at the same time, ran the argument.

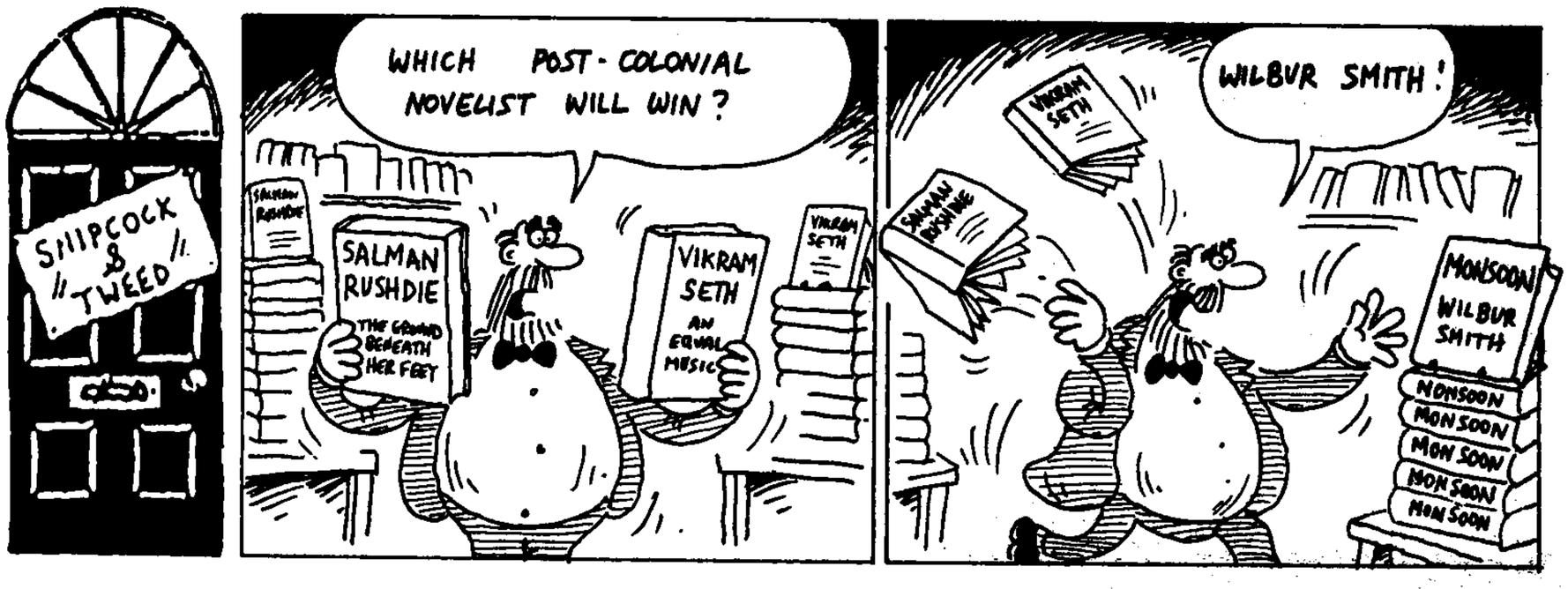
Quick as a flash the Royal Opera's casting guru Peter Katona was to be found in other opera houses of the world begging fellow casting directors to take on the singers the ROH had already engaged in the hope of easing the pay-off bill. Most houses took a dim view of bailing out the Royal Opera, and many of the singers could look forward to some paid time at home.

In the light of this, it seems strange that the Royal Opera should allow its own orchestra to appear in two places *at exactly the same time*, a practice that landed the RPO in deep water a few years ago.

Keen-eyed music lovers may have noticed that on Monday the Royal Opera's production of *Paul Bunyan* was due to return to Sadler's Wells with the Orchestra of the Royal Opera, conducted by Richard Hickox. This was on the very same evening the Queen Elizabeth Hall was boasting *Opera for a Summer Evening* with, yes, the Orchestra of the Royal Opera, conducted by Richard Fines.

If the *real* orchestra was at Sadler's Wells, which it probably was, who did the punters on the South Bank get for £22.50? Perhaps we should be told.

'Lunchtime O'Boulez'



In the City

WHILE Nato continues for now with its flawed policy of bombing Belgrade into submission over Kosovo, the world's bankers are looking forward to putting Serbia back together again. It's a dirty job... but somebody in a suit might just as well make money from it or another suit will.

Despite the bloody crimes of Slobodan Milosevic's puppets in Croatia and Bosnia, there has never been any shortage of bankers prepared to do business with "Slobo" — and not just from his traditional allies and admirers in Russia, Greece and Italy. But then as a former banker himself — Milosevic started out with Beobanka, then Yugoslavia/Serbia's biggest bank, and rose to be chairman of this Communist party fiefdom — "Slobo" knows very well how bankers think. Money, not morality, matters.

Once United Nations economic sanctions were suspended at the end of 1995 following the Dayton agreement on Bosnia, the bankers were soon heading for Belgrade. Not least because the former Yugoslavia owed more than $2bn to foreign banks and only "Slobo" could do a deal to pay any of that back. National Westminster and its front man, former Tory foreign secretary Douglas Hurd, have rightly attracted their fair share of criticism for leading the charge. NatWest Markets signed a 1996 deal to advise "Slobo" on how to settle with his bank creditors. A solution was all but there when Kosovo exploded and sanctions were reimposed last year. NatWest also advised on privatisation of the Serbian telecom business to Italian and Greek investors, which put over $250m in Belgrade's coffers only last year.

But other British-based banks were also hustling for Belgrade's business. HSBC opened a local office and is said by banking sources to have obtained a mandate to privatise Jugopetrol, run by Dragan Tomic, a leading figure in the Milosevic kleptocracy and speaker of the Serbian parliament. This is a business Nato is now looking to put out of business via an oil embargo.

ANZ Banking, whose London operation had, pre-sanctions, helped finance the state-controlled Generalexport group's British offshoot, provided a $50m, six-month loan to Beogradska Banka, run by top "Slobo" money mover Borka Vucic in 1997.

Last year German-owned West Merchant Bank hooked up with Beobanka, now part of the dominant Beogradska group, to look for possible foreign investors. None could be found. German banks such as Berliner and Commerzbank have arranged multi-million credits for Belgrade trade deals.

Hill Samuel, part of Lloyds TSB, was also successful in winning business in Yugoslavia. It agreed a $15m loan to the Jugooceanija shipping company in 1996.

The American-based Standard Bank last year was negotiating for a Western bank consortium with Beogradska on a proposed $56m credit line for five key Serbian export industries.

Japan's Nomura had also been negotiating to replace NatWest as Belgrade's foreign bank of choice (a presumed collateral casualty of the bombing) through a link with Beobanka.

All the banks concerned declare they rigorously observed sanctions and have not sought any Serb business since the Kosovo crisis began.

But once the bombing ends it will be banking business as usual with or without Milosevic. After all, it would be a pity to waste all that Serbian "schmoozing" and contacts!

REAWAKENED interest in a possible takeover bid for the Co-Operative Wholesale Society comes as the paper chase to track down the offshore recipients of £2.4m paid by previous CWS bidder Andrew Regan is hotting up.

For two years, despite Regan's enforced humiliating retreat, the Serious Farce Office has been tracking the money he paid out on a previous CWS deal. The £2.4m was supposedly paid in 1995 to Israeli businessman Ronald Zimet for brokering a supply deal between Regan's food company Hobson and the CWS.

However, Zimet is now said to be negotiating a deal to cooperate with the SFO — presumably on the time honoured basis of honesty for immunity. And he is expected to tell a somewhat different story. He may be able to prove the money was heading for offshore accounts which could have links to former CWS senior executives.

The significant factor in the paper chase is that the £2.4m would always seem to have been split in two once it left the Swiss bank account of Zimet's British Virgin Islands company, Trellis International. From Zurich the money moved into two accounts in the Channel Islands from there to the Isle of Man and onwards to Monaco.

Zimet clearly knows where the money was going to and why. The question for the SFO, as well as Andrew Regan and his little helpers, is whether he will be prepared to tell.

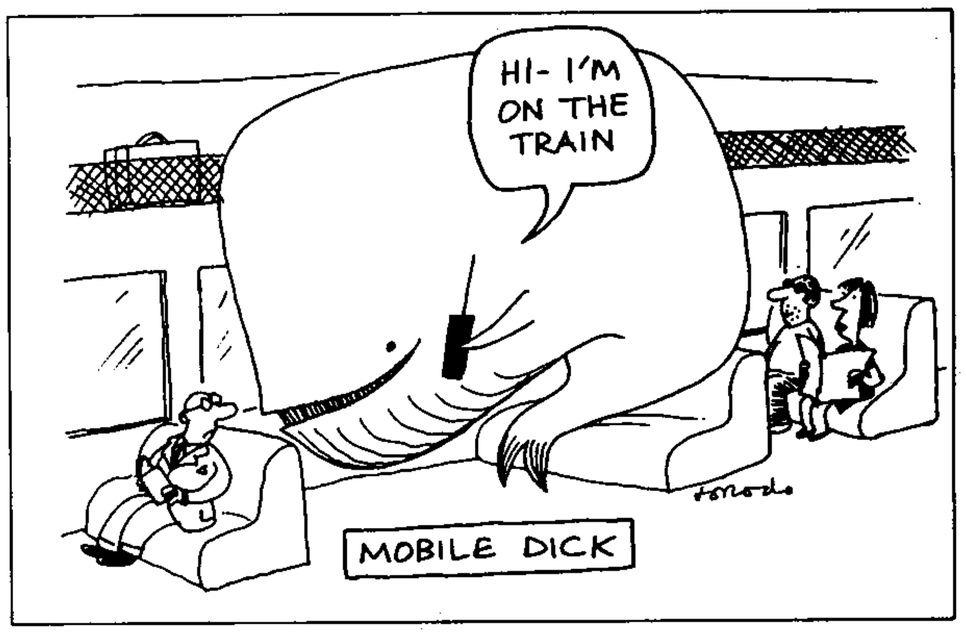
WOULD-BE peer Elliott Bernerd's friend and mentor, Hong Kong property tycoon Nina Wang, the richest woman in Asia, is attracting increasing interest across the Atlantic because of her close ties to Beijing.

For reasons only to do with philanthropy and nothing to do with political influence, Wang gave $50,000 to help restore President Clinton's boyhood home in Hope, Arkansas. But this donation has raised questions in the wake of increasing concern in Washington about China's efforts to help put Clinton back in the "Oral Office" in 1996 and suspicions that pro-China business figures were looking to influence Clinton's policy towards Beijing.

Critics of Clinton's sympathetic policy, fuelled by recent evidence of Chinese industrial espionage and its human rights-all-wrong record, have pointed to certain other charitable gestures by the pig-tailed tycoon. Such as paying for several officers from the People's Liberation Army to visit the US. These included heroes of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre. But then Wang is one of the regime's advisers.

How all this plays with Bernerd's "new" Labour fans down at London's South Bank is another matter.

CITY of London police face considerable embarrassment as a result of an internal investigation into alleged fabricated surveillance evidence which has resulted in two City detectives being charged with perjury. They are due to go to trial at the Old Bailey later this year.



The case may also throw light on why the crown prosecution service (CPS) a year ago dropped charges in a claimed $800m fraud case involving bogus Chinese bonds. The surveillance operation was mounted on two Americans who were seeking to authenticate the bonds, supposedly issued by the pre-Communist Chiang Kai-Shek regime. Unknown to them they had walked into a "sting" operation run by the US and British authorities.

The fraud case collapsed after questions were raised about the surveillance evidence. The internal police investigation would have to have been disclosed to the defendants. But this became unnecessary when the CPS dropped the charges.

MI6, on the other hand, can breathe again as it avoided any damaging trial testimony as a result of the SFO prosecution of one of its "assets", Iranian conman Jamshid Hashemi, and his also helpful lawyer Michael Palmer.

For this they had much to thank the trial judge Mr Justice Collins who, SFO sources suggest, was specially chosen because of his knowledge of the world of "spooks". Collins played a less than glorious but, for MI6, effective role in the arms-to-Iraq scandal as the Scott inquiry recorded.

First Hashemi and then Palmer pleaded guilty, thereby preventing the need for several past and present MI6 officers to give evidence. Collins had already ruled that all their pre-trial evidence should be *in camera*. He also quite rightly rejected Hashemi's preposterous suggestions that he was licensed to defraud in return for being an informant.

These rulings no doubt helped Hashemi decide to plead guilty and claim the usual 50 percent discount with a three-year sentence. He is now back in the US and unlikely to disgorge any of the multi-million proceeds sought by the SFO.

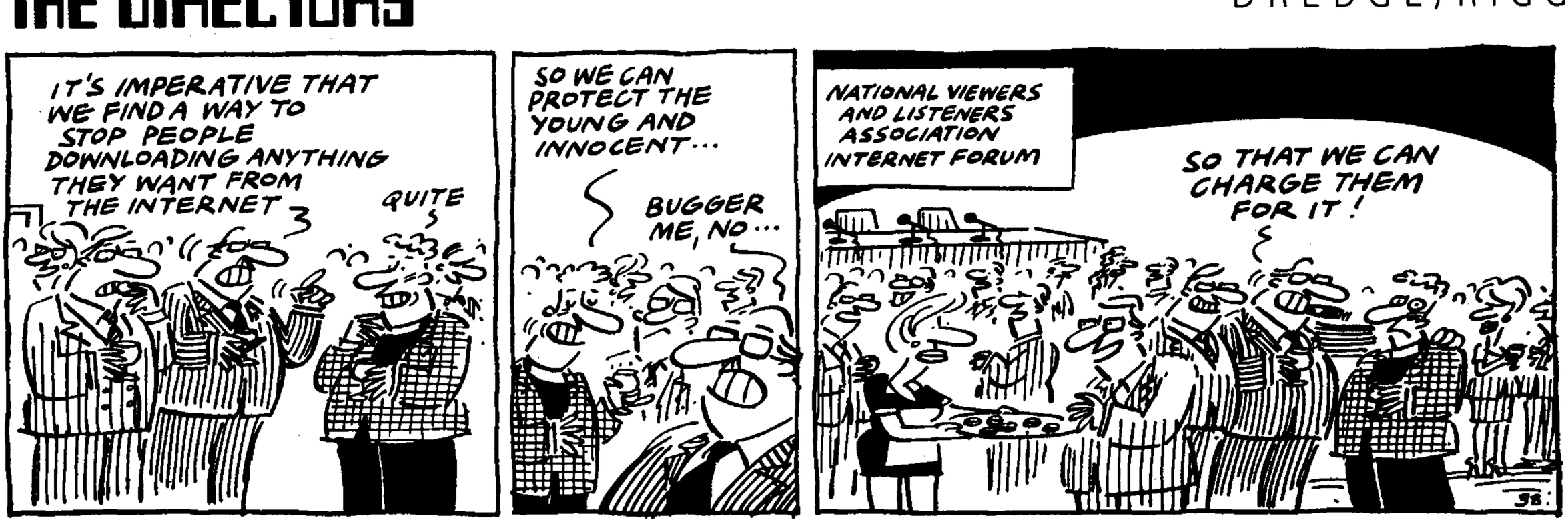
Not surprisingly, Palmer too decided to cut a similar deal, especially after the SFO switched its attention from helping Hashemi to stealing from clients' estates. One estate was that of Geoffrey Roberts, a one-time special friend of the also late Chris "Weasel" Selmes, insider dealer par excellence.

Once again, Collins was suitably compassionate. Quite rightly, Palmer received the same whack as his crooked client. An outcome which was no doubt greeted with sighs of relief and doubles all round at the ugly building by the Thames.

'Slicker'

THE DIRECTORS

DREDGE/RIGG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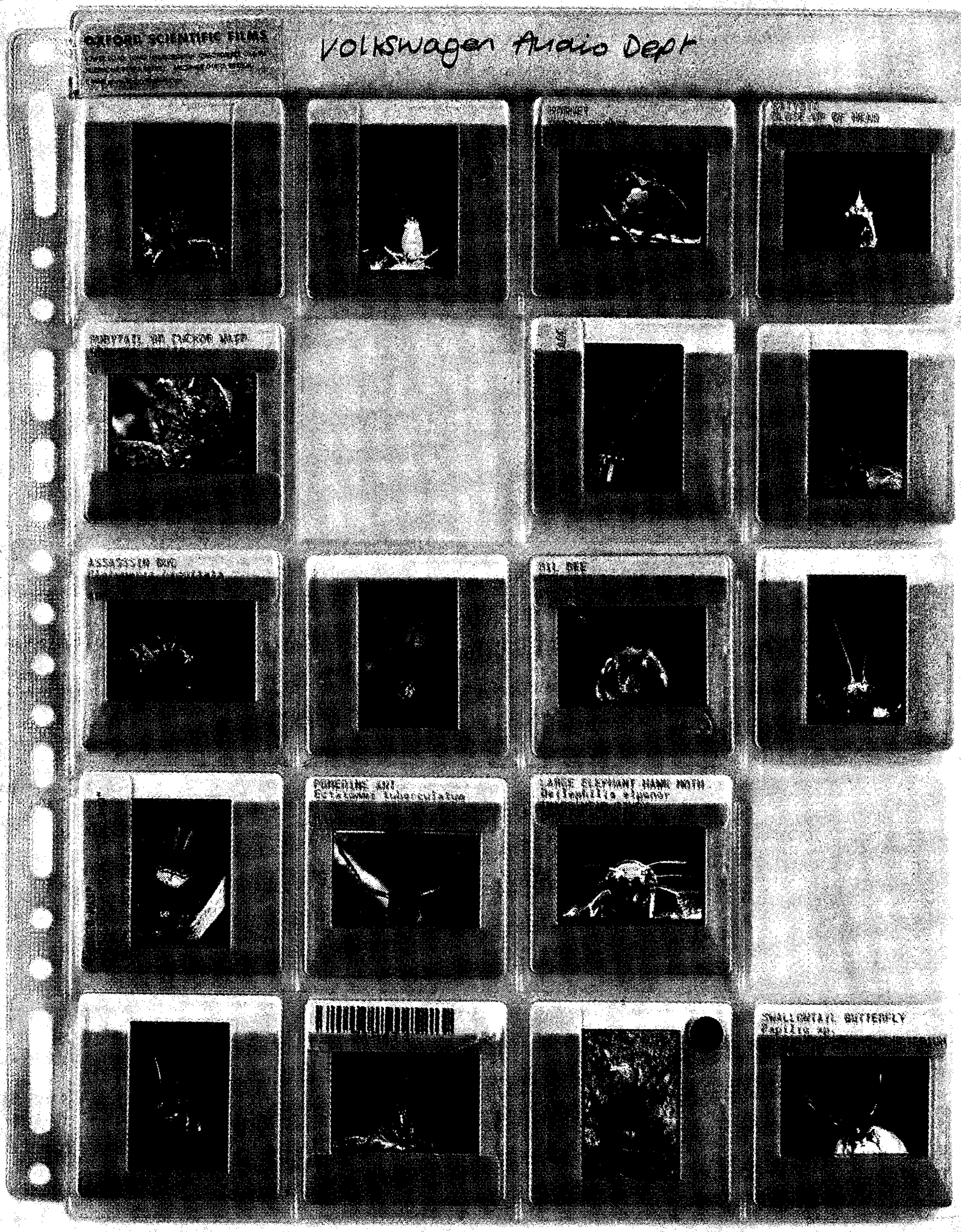

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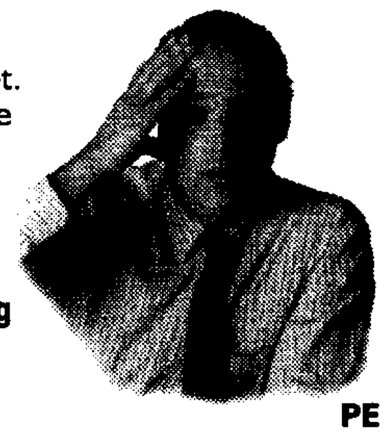

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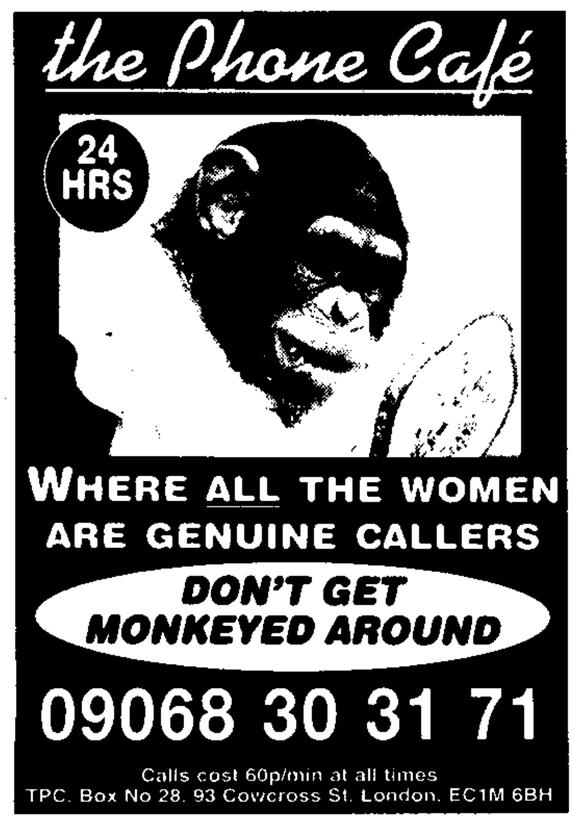
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